"THEATER AND EMPIRE: A HISTORY OF ASSUMPTIONS IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING ATLANTIC WORLD, 1700-1860"

BY

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Abstract

It was no coincidence that commercial theater, a market society, the British middle class, and the "first" British Empire arose more or less simultaneously. In the seventeenth century, the new market economic paradigm became increasingly dominant, replacing the old feudal economy. Theater functioned to "explain" this arrangement to the general populace and gradually it became part of what I call a "culture of empire" – a culture built up around the search for resources and markets that characterized imperial expansion. It also rationalized the depredations the Empire brought to those whose resources and labor were coveted by expansionists. This process intensified with the independence of the thirteen North American colonies, and theater began representing Native Americans and African American populations in ways that rationalized the dominant society's behavior toward them. By utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, this research attempts to advance a more nuanced and realistic narrative of empire in the early modern and early republic periods. I include a broader spectrum of performance than is typical in this type of analysis, giving equal credence not only to non-Anglo performances, but also to those influenced by folk culture like the circus, street theater, and blackface minstrelsy. These types of performances illuminate the imperial nature of Anglo-American culture and contribute to a new understanding of the imperial assumptions of this period. This study represents another way to give a stronger voice to the historically voiceless.

Theater and Empire: A History of Assumptions
in the English-Speaking Atlantic World, 1700-1860

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Acknowledgments

From the time I was first smitten by this topic and the somewhat curious compunction to pursue a doctorate in history, an odyssey of no mean proportions was undertaken – one to which many doctoral students can attest. On the other side of the dissertation coin are the long-suffering archivists who work hard to appease both our pressing needs and mild curiosities. I would like to thank the research room staffs at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, and the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. Also, the librarians at the Leavenworth, Kansas Public Library were quite helpful during my research on early Leavenworth theater. Without exception I found courteous and knowledgeable assistance both during my numerous visits and over telephone and e-mail exchanges. Also, Virgil Dean, the editor of *Kansas History*, a journal published through the auspices of the state historical society, continues to be a valuable source of information and advice on the Kansas portion of this work. I am fairly certain that none of these people have seen or heard the last of me.

Early assistance with this project among KU faculty members should not go unacknowledged. Ethnomusicologist Dr. Clarence Henry (no longer at KU), as well as Dr. Sherry Tucker in American Studies and Dr. Jonathan Earle in the history department were all influential in their assistance along the way. As everyone knows, secretaries keep universities running, and Ellen Garber, Sandee Kennedy, and Nancie Lockwood keep the KU history department running, assuaging miffed graduate students and faculty. They deserve thanks not only from me, but from all who enter the departmental confines. Also I would like to convey many thanks to Dr. Eve Levin, the graduate advisor that happened along at exactly the right moment.

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academic has been one of the brightest spots in my graduate school experience. My committee chair, Dr. Rita Napier, has also been a godsend. From the early seminar where my oddball interests were clearly on display, she did not shy away from free-thinking on any number of issues, particularly regarding indigenous and imperial cultures. Her willingness to walk me through the final stages of this process will be forever appreciated. It goes without saying that the shortcomings of this study are mine, and its virtues are attributable to my association with these great scholars and human beings.

On a more personal level, how I came to have such incredible friends and family who have read my writing, listened to my ramblings, spoken up when needed, and emotionally supported me when I was ricocheting off the walls is a mystery I will simply enjoy and not question. Bob Cameron, now of Englewood, Florida, is one of my two surrogate fathers, the other being Charles MacAlister of Hasty, Arkansas. Along with surrogate older brother Greg Weymann of Osage, Arkansas, these men helped clean me up, dust me off, and send me back to the world ready for more on numerous occasions. I am truly blessed not only to know these men but call them true friends. Also my sister Janet Garner has been a huge help and support during this period. In fact, she has been so pretty much all of my life. On top of that, during the St. Louis portion of this research, where the project began to move out of a long "at sea" period, it was great to have her company at one of the last baseball games played at old Busch Stadium. Her sons and my nephews, Nathan and Nick Garner have been an inspiration in their own right, giving me more than they can know.

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Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Amanda Lengal's encouragement and academic experience helped me keep my chin up more than once. Frank's eagerness to join me in bashing all the appropriate (to us) political figures has provided a welcome respite in times of outrage fatigue. I also would like to thank my step-son Eric Napolitano, and his son Marco, for the interesting conversations and sheer joy of living they continue to bring to my world.

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Introduction

"Historians are the camp-followers of the imperialists."[1] Inga Clendinnen's statement still has a ring of truth to it though this has certainly been modified in recent decades. The majority of cultural creations have ever been oriented toward the support of societal power structures and institutions. Those structures are where the wealth is, and where creators of culture might find financial support. Other cultural creations are oriented toward critiquing those power structures which, if they are wise, will encourage such critique since they stand to gain health and strength from self-study and introspection.

The present study is a survey of the relationship between performance, especially those found in the theater, and empire, defined as the expansion of market economics through the structure of the nation-state and frequent use of military force. More specifically, I argue that theater primarily served the needs of empire in the English-speaking Atlantic world from the beginnings of British expansion up to the American Civil War. Theater, like the historians in the Clendinnen quote, was a camp-follower of empire, sometimes even utilizing the acting, writing, and designing talents of the soldiers and officers in the imperial army itself. In terms of background, this study begins with those years of the seventeenth century that saw commercial theater and imperial commerce develop together in Britain and the arrival of that combination to the New World in the eighteenth century. The main focus of this study begins around 1750 with the "London Company of Comedians," (later

[1] Inga Clendinnen, "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty," in Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *New World Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 12.

known as the "American Company of Comedians," and still later as simply the "Old American Company"), the longest-lived professional acting company in the North American colonies and early republic. This company was most often patronized by those with a vested interest in the empire. The present study concludes with the arrival of an evolved form of that commercial empire onto the Great Plains in the mid-nineteenth century. The latter date represents the height of antebellum tensions surrounding the theatrical adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as well as the struggle over the expansion of slavery as seen in Kansas Territory. Moreover, by 1860 the ability of theater to assuage the cognitive dissonances of empire was overwhelmed by events as the Euro-American empire split in a bloody Civil War that permanently altered the cultural dynamics of the United States.

Historians and literary scholars have marked the beginning of an association between the theater and the rising market economy as early as the Elizabethan period in England. For example, Jean-Christophe Agnew's *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* is an analysis of the theater and the market in Tudor and Stuart England. Agnew shows how these institutions grew together as the market became more abstract and theater became more commercial. Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, operating within the expanding market economy, helped to "explain" to its audiences the new economic system that arose out of the "Mediterranean System" of trade. In so doing it created what Agnew calls "another nature," an artificial world in which the market and the theater became increasingly abstract entities. The market became abstracted in the sense of moving away from being a specific *place* to a way of doing business through investments and commodity manipulation. The theater abstracted in the sense of moving away from a numinous

ritual based on seasonal events associated with rites of passage, ceremonies, and agriculture to representing individuals engaged in the "culture" of an abstract market economy.[2] This "culture," a way of life constructed around the transaction and the contract, is what I am calling a "culture of empire" or "imperial culture," and I use the terms frequently in the present study. The transformation of the market from a *location* to a *concept* was pregnant with empire in its need for expansion. The spread of this concept through society was abetted and accompanied, Agnew shows, by its long time companion on the fringes of English traditional society: the theater. Individuals within this empire increasingly saw themselves in ways that came to be defined, in part, by these two entities that had existed as "worlds apart" from the medieval farm and village.[3] From the outset of the late medieval and Renaissance eras, theater and market economics became joined at the hip. As this economic system grew and the demand for more natural resources and markets increased so did the push for national expansion, and such demand was reflected in theater performances.

Britain first formed this imperial identity in its transformation from "England" to the more broadly-defined "Britain." Literary historian Marc Shell has pointed out that much of the literature of sixteenth- and seventeenth century England was concerned with uprooted identities due to the new economic system. Joan Webber and Stephen Greenblatt have both studied the relationships between literature and

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[2] Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1995; orig. pub. University Press of America, 1982), 142-143; Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), passim. The debate on ritual and theater and whether the latter arises from the former is voluminous and Rozik summarizes the debate in the introduction to this work.

[3] Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), ix-xiv.

perceptions of the self during the Shakespearean era.[4] The imperial aspect of theatrical performances during the formation of the nation-state of Britain itself is the subject of Tristan Marshall's *Theater and Empire*.[5] Marshall's work is of a more strictly literary critique and does not engage a broader scope of primary source material. Natasha Glaisyer has recently studied the identity-forming aspects of the Royal Exchange, the clergy, merchant advice literature, and newspapers in Restoration London in her work on an English culture of commerce – a close parallel to the present study's "culture of empire."[6] Kathleen Wilson, whose work is among those who have provided a model for the present study, searched for identities of Englishness in the Hanoverian period and discovered a culture of empire as it was displayed both in London and the provinces. She found that:

> Empire – its existence, aggrandizement, and concerns – permeated Georgian culture at a number of levels: literature (both adult and children's), theater, music, painting, leisure pursuits, gardening, philanthropy, fashion, religion, politics, and graphic and literary propaganda.[7]

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[4] Marc Shell, *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Joan Webber, *The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Arnold Weinstein, *Fictions of the Self: 1550-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press); Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004); Greenblatt with Catherine Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[5] Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000). Other pertinent titles are footnoted in the chapter.

[6] Natasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society and the Boydell Press, 2006).

[7] Kathleen Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent: Imperialism and the Politics of Identity in Georgian England, in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995), 238. See also Wilson, *A Sense of the People*, *Island Nation*, *A New Imperial History*, and *The Colonial Stage: Theatre, Culture, and Modernity in the Provinces, 1720-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

Wilson's study of the identity of the "island nation" of Britain also provides part of the foundation for the present work. Where Wilson's focus is on Britain and on many aspects of popular culture, my focus is on North America and the United States, and more specifically on theater and performance.

The present study has as one of its central operating assertions the inherently imperial nature of the culture and society of Anglo North America including, after 1776, the United States. This is in keeping with the spirit of inquiry pioneered in U.S. history by Charles Beard who first pointed out the economic aspect of American constitutionalism, although he stopped short of using the word "empire."[8] Since Beard's ground-breaking work, literary and cultural scholars have led the way in arguing that the United States was an empire from the beginning. Dating back to Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* and Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*, a body of literature produced by scholars that resisted becoming the "camp-followers of the imperialists" blazed a trail along these lines.[9] By the 1970s, works by Richard Slotkin, Robert Berkhofer, and others confronted the mythic dimension of American historical thought, serving a function not unlike that of Charles Beard earlier in the century; namely, confronting imperial views of violence, hegemony, and economics that were cloaked in a mythical rhetoric of nationalism.[10] More recent historical

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[8] Charles A Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The New Press, 1913). The word "empire" does not appear in Beard's index.

[9] Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Viking Press, 1950); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

[10] Richard Slotkin has a series of anti-Turnerian studies: *Regeneration through Violence: The Myth of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); *Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985); *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Atheneum, 1992); and most recently, *Lost Battalions: The Great War and the Crisis of American Nationality* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005). See also Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian:*

works that engage the "imperial-ness" of the early republic are represented by Peter Onuf's *Jefferson's Empire* and William Earl Weeks's *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*. While the former tends toward the biographical, the latter is a study in diplomatic history. Unlike the present study, they do not investigate a "culture of empire," but rather the political economics of imperialism.[11]

Recent literary scholars have continued the trend toward acknowledging the imperial nature of the early United States. Felicity Nussbaum, Amy Kaplan, Donald Pease, and Andy Doolen have all focused on America as empire.[12] These works are varied in the reliance of their arguments upon primary sources, but they all point out that the expansion of empire – British and Anglo-American – left many people in its wake. The present study's critical look at the function and meaning of performance in an expanding empire strives to reveal how mythical creations of the culture of empire worked.

Many historians who *have* served as "camp-followers of the imperialists" continue to argue that American empire was something that did not begin until 1898. This view is ultimately untenable. It was no coincidence that the annexation of Hawaii and the Spanish-American War began almost immediately after the Wounded

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History of an Idea from Columbus to the Present (New York: Knopf, 1978).

[11] Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992).

[12] Felicity Nussbaum, "The Theatre of Empire: Radical Counterfeit, Racial Realism," in Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 71-90; and edited with Laura Brown, *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993); Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

Knee Massacre in 1890 – the last military "battle" of the "Indian Wars."[13] The American expansion of the 1890s, like British expansion in the late sixteenth century, was simply a continuation. Some commentators have argued that even this post-1890 empire was given away, although they came under sustained criticism almost immediately.[14]

Another trope that, I argue, plagues the writing of cultural history and one which the present study strives to address is the use of national identity as the primary way of defining culture. Most histories of the theater, and of the first British Empire for that matter, ignore the aspects of cultural continuity in their search for American identity and difference. While it is true that Anglo-Americans strongly sought a separate identity during and after the Revolution and this search must be acknowledged, culture is not simply packaged as the construction of an "American identity" implies. As E.J. Hobsbawm notes, "Nationalism requires belief in that which is patently not so." And, quoting Ernst Renan, he adds, "Getting its history

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[13] Treatment of these phenomena as a continuation of the Indian Wars is exemplified by Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); and most recently a journalistic treatment by Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2006).

[14] Julius William Pratt, *America's Colonial Experiment: How the United States Gained, Governed, and in Part Gave Away a Colonial Empire* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1950); Foster Rhea Dulles, *America's Rise to World Power, 1898-1954* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1955); William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," in *Pacific Historical Review*, 24:4 (November, 1955), 379-395; also his *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Norton, 1959). Andrew Bacevich provides an interesting and concise retrospective on both Williams and Charles Beard and their highly-criticized concerns about American empire in the twentieth century that, notably, have proven prophetic. See Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7-31. Works by historians who are clearly of the "camp-follower" spirit include Niall Ferguson, *Collosus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); and *Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2002); Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006); and David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

wrong is part of being a nation."[15] The empire of market economics, like culture, (only diplomatically and militarily supported), readily traverses national boundaries and is a deeper historical force than nationalism. This, in my view, makes it a more satisfying analytical device.

Surveying the broader historiography of early American theater, one soon finds oneself in a forest of assumptions and prejudices rooted in nationalist narratives. William Dunlap was the American theater's first historian as well as one of the first theater managers in the new United States. He attempted to perpetuate on the theater stage as well as in his history the republicanism and patriotism of the Revolution that he felt were essential to nurturing a national "character." Dunlap's two volume *History of the American Theatre*, published in 1832, initiated the narrative of "Whig" theater history. A more truly romanticized version of American theater history is displayed by Charles Durang's *History of the Philadelphia Stage between the Years 1749 and 1855*. This history, which first ran as a serial in the *Philadelphia Dispatch* in 1852 was eventually published in 1868, but strangely not since. Lewis Hallam, manager of the London Company of Comedians that dominated the theater stage into the early republic period, is portrayed by Durang as a Thespian Columbus. Durang tells the story of Hallam and company gazing o'er the "wastes of Virginia," wondering how theater could possibly be established in this howling wilderness. The seeming hopelessness of the troupe's situation was manifest there on the Chesapeake in 1752 when suddenly, a rainbow appeared – reflected on an evening rainstorm. Obviously, it was a sign of divine support for the Thespians and their "civilizing"

[15] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12.

force in North America, "for in that sign we will conquer."[16] Theater folk, if one accepts Durang's narrative, had a well-established space in the crowded camp that followed the imperialist project into North America. Durang's pioneer Thespians, engaged in the "rational enterprize *[sic]* of erecting a theatre in the depth of the woods in the land of the *Troglodytes*," (italics in original), found a New World audience of British and Anglo-American plantation owners and government officials.[17] The narrative of "Whig" theater history is an imperial narrative.

Durang was followed by George Seilhamer with his *History of the American Theatre*. Published in three volumes between 1888 and 1891, it perpetuates the "Manifest Destiny" of Anglo-American theater as well. Arthur Hornblow's 1919 two volume study, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* adopts an imperial conquest narrative. Puritan intolerance, building theaters in the sparsely settled tidewater, "courageous thespians pressing their way through the still virgin forests," and even a reference to "the great American desert" – a recycling of a standard description of the pre-1849 Great Plains – characterize Hornblow's rhetorical approach.[18]

Richard Moody's *America Takes the Stage* focuses on the romantic interpretation of American conquest as seen on eighteenth- and nineteenth century theater stages. Here, the "romanticist," that individual who delights "in rosy

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[16] Charles Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage between the Years 1749 and 1855* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch, 1868; first published as a serial, 1852), 5. This phenomenon is observed also by Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 161.

[17] Durang, *History*, 5.

[18] Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1919; reprinted New York, London: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 9; Johnson, 159-163.

recollections and fervid hopes," and whose "revolutionary spirit prefers to act on faith . . . to follow the sentimental longings of his heart," occupies center stage. Such a spirit, Moody argues, permeated the Revolution, the Age of Jackson, and the Civil War. I argue that Romanticism in the United States was actually a post-Revolution phenomenon. "Gothic melodrama" lent itself well to the mysterious nature of the interior of the continent as a democratizing empire moved inland.[19]

Arthur Hobson Quinn's *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War*; Hugh F. Rankin, *The Theater in Colonial America*; Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre*; and the more recent Walter Meserve's *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828*; round out the heart of the traditional canon of early American theater history.[20] While providing invaluable groundwork, these studies reflect and perpetuate the uncritical mythology of nationalistic assumptions that need to be and have been challenged.

Focusing on colonial theater in the British New World, theater historian Odai Johnson acknowledges as much in his brief discussion of "conquest history" in *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theater: Fiorelli's Plaster*.[21] The present

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[19] Richard Moody, *America Takes the Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 2-7. Another "romantic" study of American theater that goes beyond what could be called "history" include Howard Taubman, *The Making of the American Theatre* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1965).

[20] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York: F.S. Crofts and Co., 1944); Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (New York, London: Benjamin Blom, 1965); Hugh F. Rankin, *The Theater in Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982); Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977).

[21] Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory: Fioreli's Plaster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160.

study is among the first to benefit from this recent work that confronts and begins to deconstruct assumptions that burden the earlier historiography. Johnson demonstrates that theater was much more common in the British colonies than previous writers have allowed, even in the allegedly anti-theater North.[22] This exposes another trope in theater history, the trope of a "pro-" and "anti-" theater "battle." Even where theater was limited and roundly condemned, people knew what it was and tolerated it to some extent. True to the title, Johnson's exhaustive research shows that even in the absence of historical evidence, of which there is no shortage, (a rhetorical construction that reflects the spirit of Johnson's book), sometimes those absences are themselves historical evidence. For example, the absence of a performance of Mercy Otis Warren's revolutionary plays during the War for Independence reveals the fact that New Englanders, even those who shared Warren's disapproval of theater as an agent of British imperialism, were quite familiar with the medium compared to Native Americans, Dutch, or Métis who were not. Johnson shows that the economic elite of Boston supported the presentation of plays as "instructive lectures in five parts" at a time when plays were outlawed.[23]

Definitions of vital terms have also been ambiguous in the earlier histories. Johnson joined William Burling to provide a calendar of colonial performance that makes significant strides toward bringing clarity to the discourse of colonial theater history. *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* consolidates and cleans up the work that was previously scattered throughout the

[22] Johnson, *Absence and Memory,* especially his chapter "Spoiling Nice Stories," 159-180.

[23] Ibid., 119-144

numerous "Whig" monographs. Old and problematic definitions of terms like "professional," "amateur," "legitimate," etc., clouded historical discourse and they now have been clarified somewhat by Johnson and Burling. Yet, from the perspective of the present study, at least one problem remains. Their *Calendar* considers as "legitimate," those plays that are "high drama," i.e., sophisticated plot and dialogue, as opposed to "low spectacle" which is intended for a "lower common denominator" of audience.[24] This becomes problematic almost immediately because the typical evening at the theater, especially after the American Revolution, included a drama followed by an "entre-act" (song, dance, skit) and an afterpiece which was usually a farce. Often the farce was more "low spectacle" than "legitimate." Indeed, "low spectacle" began to take over a significant market share of the stage after the Revolution. This process I call the "democratization" of empire, and it began to bring together the idea of imperial expansion, driven by the prospect of individual material gain, and traditional folk culture, creating a syncretic culture that assuaged the cognitive dissonances of empire. This false dialectic is belied by the complexity of performance, be it high drama, farce, melodrama, circus, pantomime, a parade, a puppet show, or a fireworks display. Since I consider all performances "legitimate" at some level, for mainstream stock theater plays I use that term in quotation marks to signal this caveat.[25]

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[24] Odai Johnson and William Burling, *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 21-22.

[25] To his credit, Bruce McConachie's entry in the *Cambridge History of American Theatre* eschews the class construction of what constitutes "theater." See McConachie, "American Theatre in Context, from the Beginnings to 1870," in Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby, eds., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111-181.

Competition for resources, markets, influence, wealth, and power led to far-flung empires. Imperial wars ensued, drawing in indigenous residents and trading partners who found themselves besieged but also deeply engaged in the imperial economy. These residents both jumped and were pushed into the imperial game that greatly altered their own cultures, making them increasingly dependent on the Atlantic market economy for their livelihood.[26] In the context of the English-speaking Atlantic world, such a conflict was the American Revolution, and performances did not stop for the war, although the nuances and restrictions of performance were very revealing of the civil aspects of the conflict. While the Revolution was seemingly a rejection by the colonists of the British Empire, it was not a rejection of their own empire. Scholars have focused on the political, the ideological, the military, and many of the social and cultural aspects of the Revolution. But there is very little literature that could be considered a study of the imperial aspects of *both* sides of the conflict.[27]

Several scholars have studied the plays written "for the closet" by Mercy Otis Warren in the early 1770s, sister of the radical Whig barrister James Otis and wife of James Warren of Plymouth.[28] Kenneth Silverman's 1976 study, *The Cultural History*

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[26] Numerous studies document this process, but two of the more notable, in my view, are James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omuhundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, 1989); and Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[27] See Philip Lawson's historiographical discussions on the broader view of the British Empire, especially his essay collection, *A Taste for Empire and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660-1800* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1997).

[28] There are numerous biographies of Mercy Otis Warren, most recently Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), hereafter *MOW*; see also Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, IL:

of the American Revolution, is the most extensive cultural history of the period, covering visual, dramatic, and literary artistic productions from the Stamp Act of 1765 to the establishment of the Constitutional U.S. government in 1789.[29] This is very much a celebratory nationalistic history timed for the United States' bicentennial, though the scope of research is quite impressive. Another study of theater focused specifically on this period is Jared Brown's history of theater during the Revolution, which is essentially an updating of the Whig theater histories.[30] While these histories are exemplary of the "positivist" style of cultural scholarship, they nevertheless are short on analysis, while the literary studies are short on primary source support.[31] Theater and performance during the American Revolution is much more nuanced than these works have shown, and the present study delves into those subtleties that are revealed through the analytical device of empire.

The assumptions of nationalist mythology in the early historiography were rooted in the primary sources of the early republic. The difficulties historians have encountered in drawing a strong distinction between colonial and post-revolutionary

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Harlan Davidson, 1995). Also see Alice Brown, *Mercy Warren* (New York: Scribner's , 1896); Katharine Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958). Most work on Mrs. Warren is contained in anthologies and journals, and I know of none that treat of elements of empire in her work. A useful selected bibliography can be found in the Richards biography, 179-185.

[29] Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution: Painting, Music, Literature, and the Theatre in the Colonies and the United States from the Treaty of Paris to the Inauguration of George Washington, 1763-1789* (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1976).

[30] Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[31] Bruce McConachie's call for historical performance analysis is rooted in the sources but going beyond mere description remains valid, although much has been done since his article on the subject appeared. See McConachie, "Toward a Post-Positivist Theater History," *Theatre Journal*, 37:4 (December, 1985), 465-48.

theater in these histories underscores the limitations of nationalistic interpretation. Certainly, there was a call for an identity "uniquely American," but when that identity finally began to emerge, it was not what the "pioneers" of American culture like William Dunlap, Noah Webster, Hugh Henry Brackenridge and others had in mind.[32] Indeed, those excluded from enjoying the benefits of the Revolution – particularly African Americans and Native Americans – were the very groups that gave the culture of the United States most of its uniqueness. White elites had hoped for some sort of republican theater that rivaled the British "legitimate" theater; what they got, eventually, were romantic "Indian" melodramas, blackface skits that imitated African American culture, and "Coon" songs. That these were part of an imperial culture of the United States is the argument of the present study.

The amalgamation of the culture of market economics with European, especially English, folk cultures is a subtext of the second half of this study. Other historians have noticed the presence of folk culture in performance phenomena such as melodrama, pantomime, the circus, blackface minstrelsy, and other miscellaneous acts like fireworks displays and, later, sporting events. Bruce McConachie, for example, has included a chapter on "fairy-tale melodrama," in his book on the genre. Robert Toll's *Blacking Up*, a groundbreaking work on minstrelsy, acknowledges the presence of folk culture within those performances as does Dale Cockrell's more recent study *Demons of Disorder*.[33] Yet, none of these writers explore the

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[32] For a succinct survey of what they had in mind, see Eve Cornfield, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001). It should also be noted that "post-revolution" is a far cry from "post-colonial," which is a different discussion beyond the present scope of this study.

[33] Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 29-63; Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in*

"democratization" of empire that was occurring in the aftermath of the Revolution. Historians usually reserve democratization in the theater for the Jacksonian period. While Jacksonian democracy was no fiction, it has become a trope perpetuated as much by the writings of the early Whig historians as by the sources. As the present study demonstrates, democratic forces (called "the mob" by elites) were present in the street performances of the colonies as early as the 1760s, and demand for melodrama, battle extravaganzas, equestrians, and popular songs disrupted the "legitimate" performances in the theaters of the 1790s. Furthermore, with the departure of the British, individuals flocked over the Appalachians and something of a free-for-all for the best land ensued with its concomitant complications. Folklorists have acknowledged the continuity of folk culture throughout this period in North America, but they typically do not follow the contours of empire in the dispersion of that culture. Also, these scholars tend to seek the "pure drop" and eschew syncretism between folk and market cultures.[34] Historians, for their part, fail to acknowledge the continuity of a culture of empire in the English-speaking Atlantic world, yet readily acknowledge a market economy and the fact that the American Revolution was not fought *against* that economy, but for *control* of it. The present study connects these dots; that is, it shows the formation of a democratized culture of empire with the melding of folk elements with market culture. This connection is crucial in demonstrating both the cultural change that takes place over time and the

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Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[34] See, for example, Richard Dorson, *America in Legend: Folklore from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

simultaneous continuity of culture between 1775 and 1800. For example, theater historians often mention Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787) as the first "American" play and their assertion makes sense. However, this play takes its plot and general outline from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (1777). The similarities are much greater than the differences, yet it is always the differences that get attention. From the perspective of imperial economic expansion and its associated cultural creations, these plays are both part of a broader culture of empire.[35]

Heather Nathans' recent *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* connects the dots between the bourgeoisie and the theaters of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the 1790s. Nathans provides valuable insight into another trope, that of "Feds" and "Antis" and their competing theaters in these cities. It turns out that investors in the Haymarket Theater of Boston, for example, which provided more egalitarian performances than was found at the Federal Theater, were no more invested in republican Jeffersonian ideology than the Federal's investors and vice versa. Yet, she inadvertently reconstructs the trope of a cultural divide between Anglo-North America and England that, compared to other extant cultural divisions in North America, was minimal.[36] Because nationalism is the lens through which Nathans analyzes theater in the early republic, the significance in the continuity between that theater and the stock plays of the Empire's colonies is lost, as is the adaptation of folk modes by the culture of

[35] The ambiguities of *The Contrast* are further discussed in Chapter Four.

[36] Heather Nathans, *Early American Theater from the Revolution to Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12. See my forthcoming review of Nathans (and Odai Johnson, cited below), in *Reviews in American History*, 36:2 (June, 2008).

empire. Acknowledging the continuity of empire in the U.S. after the American Revolution, which the present study does, reveals both the limits of nationalism as an analytical tool as well as the presence of stronger and longer lasting – and thus more significant – historical forces, like economic empire.

While the aforementioned works provide the historiographical parameters of the present study, there is a growing literature in the interdisciplinary realm of cultural studies of which the present study aspires to be a part. S.E. Wilmer's *Theatre, Society and the Nation* is a short collection of his essays focused on different time periods from the colonial and revolutionary era to the late twentieth century.[37] While Wilmer's focus is on the variance from colony to nation rather than continuity, thus perpetuating the nationalism trope, he nevertheless acknowledges and studies a broader spectrum of performance that includes indigenous culture. In his chapter, "Independence for Whom? American Indians and the Ghost Dance," Wilmer acknowledges the need for an empire-centered analysis of performance in history.[38]

Another study in this category is Catherine Hall's anthology, *Cultures of Empire*.[39] Contributors to this volume explore down the paths blazed by the earlier seminal works of Edward Said, Michael Foucault, the subalternists, and others in their critique of empire and its historians.[40] While most of these studies are of the

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[37] S.E. Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and Nation: Staging American Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[38] Ibid., 80-97. Wilmer's study of theater's role in resistance to the hegemonic culture is also in keeping with my view of the culture of empire, in this case he looks at the "flip side," or dissident culture.

[39] Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[40] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Michel Foucault was quite prolific, an example is his *Discipline and Punishment: A History of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New

second British imperial period, c. 1840-1960, they are related to the present work in demonstrating the way empire, culture, and identity are intertwined. Kathleen Wilson's essay on imperial identity in Hanoverian Britain is particularly similar to the present study in its construction of such an identity in provincial England of this earlier period.[41] Daniel O'Quinn's *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800*, joins this effort in demonstrating an imperial identity and culture imbedded in politics, print culture, and performance although his focus is on India and the British Empire rather than North America. Most recently the essays in another anthology, edited by Kathleen Wilson entitled *A New Imperial History*, continues the conversation.

These authors have opened the door to the recognition of how imperial assumptions embed themselves in cultural productions. Yet the impact of a culture of empire on the expanding society of the United States after the Revolution is an area that remains thinly treated by historians. Theater became more accessible to the "plebian" class – what Samuel Coleridge called "modern, illiterate savages" and Charles Lamb "men of genius." In a broader scope, scholars have begun to acknowledge the importance of melodrama in the public sphere of the late eighteenth and early centuries. Previous studies of American melodrama typically saw this genre as an unfortunate transitional phase between the stock Augustan plays and the

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York: Pantheon, 1977). The subalternist view is rooted in Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, 3 volumes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992; orig. pub. *Quaderni del carcere*,) written in the 1930s. As it has emerged in the Indian subcontinent, this view is laid out in the journal *Subaltern Studies*, as well as works such as Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

[41] Kathleen Wilson, "Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720-90," in Hall, ed., 158-186.

"modern" plays beginning in the late nineteenth century. An exception was David Grimstead's 1967 work, *Melodrama Unveiled*, which saw the melodrama as a way for historians to survey the social milieu of the largely voiceless American working class. Rosemary K. Bank has shown how melodrama had much to offer those who lived during this so-called Romantic era and is therefore worthy of historians' attention.[42] A recent and important anthology on melodrama edited by Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou also acknowledge the importance of melodrama. They seek to establish the complexity of this milieu in the British Empire, c. 1783-1914. Their collection of studies has served as a reminder of the multifarious representations of race, class, and gender that characterize imperial theater.[43]

The circus, while left out of the "Whig" canon entirely, has had the benefit of passionate devotees who have tried to nurture a history of that institution.[44] Two fairly recent works by noted scholars that treat this topic are Neil Harris' *Humbug:*

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[42] Rosemary K. Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[43] Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); David Grimstead, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Grimstead's bibliography has a useful survey of one of his most valuable sources, dissertations and theses on theater history. For a survey of these dissertations up to 1969, see Frederic Litto, *American Dissertations on the Drama and the Theatre: A Bibliography* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1969).

[44] Some of the "classic" studies of circus, some of which strive for an entertainment value not unlike their subject, include P.T. Barnum's own, *Struggles and Triumphs: Or, Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum* (Hartford: J.B. Burt, 1869); Rupert Croft-Cooke and Peter Cotes, *Curcus: A World History* (London: Elek, 1976); Marion Murray, *Circus!: From Rome to Ringling* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956); Isaac J. Greenwood, *The Circus, Its Origin and Growth Since 1835* (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1898); R.W.G. Vail, *Random Notes in the History of the Early American Circus* (Barre, MA: Barre Gazette, 1956); and finally one of the highest quality studies of the circus, on the origins of the circus in England and France, is A.H. Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse: A History of the Hippodrama in England and France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). One must also mention the Circus History Society which maintains a website on the topic, www.circushistory.com. Links to archival resources in circus history seem to be maintained regularly.

The Art of P.T. Barnum, and David Carlyon's *Dan Rice: The Most Famous Man You've Never Heard Of*. Both of these books help to keep circus history current, although there remains a need for a newer social analysis of the changing role of the circus in the pantheon of public performance.[45]

One way this study departs from the theater histories noted above is its pursuit of the changing nature of performance as Euro-American society moved westward in the nineteenth century. By the early years of that century, theater performances were common in select locations west of the Alleghenies, particularly Pittsburgh, Lexington, and a little later, Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis. Outside of a few dissertations that provide invaluable chronologies of who, what, when, where, and how, there are few works that seriously approach the question of why. William G.B. Carson's two volume study of St. Louis theater largely follows the careers of Solomon Smith and Noah Ludlow, two pioneer thespians whose companies, largely itinerant in nature, brought stock plays to the Trans-Appalachian West.[46] West T. Hill's study of Lexington theater falls into this category as well. Marilyn Dee Casto has written a survey of the theaters, actors, and audiences of Kentucky that includes some early material. Chapter One of Lynne Connor's *Pittsburgh in Stages* treats in a somewhat cursory fashion the theater scene in the early years of that city. But by and

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[45] Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); David Carlyon, *Dan Rice: The Most Famous Man You've Never Heard Of* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

[46] William G.B. Carson, *Theatre on the Frontier: The Early Years of the St. Louis Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932); and *Managers in Distress: The St. Louis Stage, 1840-1844* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Association, 1949); West T. Hill, *Theatre in Early Kentucky, 1790-1820* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971); Marilyn Dee Casto, *Actors, Audiences, and Historic Theaters of Kentucky* (University of Kentucky Press, 2000); Lynne Connor, *Pittsburgh in Stages: Two Hundred Years of Theatre* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

large, cultural histories of the Trans-Appalachian West have largely been along lines of racial analysis and have not grappled with the implications of an imperial culture. The present study explores how a culture of empire brings a common thread to the usual analytical categories of race, class, and gender.

The racialized culture of this region was epitomized by "redface" performances – white actors portraying mythologized Indians – and blackface minstrelsy. Melodrama and "redface" performance were united in the classic showpiece of the famous nineteenth-century actor Edwin Forrest, *Metamora*. Modeled on "King Philip's War" in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, this play depicts both the "noble" and "ignoble" savage and provides a stereotype of the American Indian that persists to this day. Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* has been an influential study of white perceptions of "Indian-ness." Another cultural study that weighs in on the imperial nature of Indian depictions in American history is Richard Drinnon's *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. These and other studies have greatly illuminated the conversation on this aspect of U.S. cultural history. These investigations into a North American post-colonial viewpoint capture the meaning of imperial culture after the American Revolution. This meaning is the subject of the present study, which explores the culture of empire in a broader performance context.[47]

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[47] Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980). Other important works along this line are S. Elizabeth Bird, ed., *Dressed in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Carter Jones Mayer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001); Donald Trent Jacobs (Wahinkpe Topa), *Unlearning the Language of Conquest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

As for blackface performance and minstrelsy, a group of relevant works provide a starting point and represent a sub-field of the literature of cultural historiography coming to be known as "Minstrel Studies." The leading light of this genre is W.T. Lhamon, Jr., whose studies of Jacksonian minstrelsy from T.D. Rice to Dan Emmett have established the multifarious meanings of minstrelsy. His *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* illustrates how double and triple entendres were utilized in minstrelsy to criticize elites and stereotype blacks. *Jump Jim Crow* is primarily a collection of primary sources that illustrate specifically how this worked in the texts, but it also identifies this culture – the present study's culture of empire – as having an Atlantic scope. Lhamon has also written an important essay on the roots of American popular culture in the Jacksonian and antebellum eras in the introduction to a reprint of Constance Rourke's classic, *American Humor*. Eric Lott pioneered a post-modern approach in his book *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrels and the American Working Class*. Lott posits a Freudian explanation of the psychological aspects of the genre, stating that it was repressed sexuality in large measure that drew whites in as both performers and spectators. The earliest performances of blackface that focused strictly on the caricatured African American and drew on the influences of pre-modern European folk culture have been treated by Dale Cockrell's *Demons of Disorder*. The blackface found in street performance predating the minstrel stage was quite ancient in its origins in folk culture and had little to do with Africans. In his *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask*, William Mahar explores the philology of "negro dialect" in blackface performance, noting that the original dialect used was West Indian, where a much larger influx of West African culture persisted over time. Mahar surveys the various dialects of

African American speech patterns and their use in essentially degrading black culture on the nineteenth-century stage. Michael Paul Rogin's *Blackface, White Noise* explores the meaning of blackface performance in America after the Civil War and into the twentieth century. He shows how Jewish immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were able to work their way into mainstream American culture by caricaturing blacks on the stage. The Irish, Rogin reminds his readers, had done something similar in mid-century, a view supported by Noel Ignatiev in *How the Irish Became White*. A useful anthology that covers numerous aspects of minstrelsy from gender and class interpretations, to early histories, political contexts, details from the shows themselves, is *Inside the Minstrel Mask*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara.[48] These works all show, among other things, that there were double and triple entendres in these performances as well as liberating aspects that whites found in wearing the mask of blackface performance. While these works have revealed the nuances of meaning in blackface minstrelsy, there is surprisingly little analysis of the importance of empire in its development. Given the societal circumstances of blacks in the Atlantic world in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, it seemed strange that so little analysis of imperial analysis

[48] W.T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); ed., *Jump Jim Crow:Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003); "Constance Rourke's Secret Reserve," Introduction to Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character (*Reprint, Gainesville: Florida State University Press, 1986); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Michael Paul Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

exists. The present study "connects the dots" in regard to imperial expansion and the exploitation of labor and land and how this process is treated in popular performances.

Using the above studies as a starting point, I trace the ways in which performance rationalized, justified, and normalized market economics – i.e. capitalism – including the employment by its purveyors of violent force in the ever-expanding search for new resources and markets. I also include examples of how performance was used to resist this expansion, particularly by indigenous peoples of North America, as well as how various nuances of empire manifested themselves in performance. An example of the former would be the Pan-Indian movement of the Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa and the various performances associated with it. The latter can be seen in the civil war between imperial forces known as the American Revolution, where empire was simultaneously resisted and supported through elements of traditional folk culture. This study explores those instances as well as the more direct reflections of empire created on the stage by playwrights, actors, and audiences.

Doing cultural history can mean walking a fine line between source-driven analyses and theorizing about what the sources cannot tell us. Influenced by Marshall Berman's admonition to utilize a "both/and" approach to cultural history, I try to be inclusive of both perspectives.[49] Nevertheless, my primary loyalty is to the sources, and I try to rely on them as much as possible throughout this study. These sources include, but are not limited to, memoirs and journals of players and managers,

[49] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into the Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

newspapers and other contemporary periodicals, travel narratives, and analyses (usually by me) of the plays themselves. Ultimately, this is a work in progress and more research and analysis can always be done. There are numerous sources that were beyond my reach, most notably the Billy Rose Theater Collection at the New York Public Library, various collections in the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Harvard Theater Collection to name a few. However, some of these resources are online and others I accessed vicariously through secondary works. Still others have been published and were accessible to me. Also, primary sources for a significant part of this study, from Ohio to St. Louis to territorial Kansas, were available to me, and they provided a significant part of the source material – enough so that I feel the state of the present study provides a solid basis for future revisions and publications.

Notions of empire permeated Anglo-American culture so thoroughly that they became assumptions. These assumptions changed over time and I follow that change and nuance over nearly two centuries. Assumptions are so obvious to those that have them that they usually go unnoticed until some event jars them into consciousness. When Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," he was referring to assumptions. These exist on both the person and the societal level, and once they are acknowledged it can be hard to notice anything else. It took me several years of reading both primary and secondary sources and presenting my evolving investigations at conference panels and audiences with widely varying degrees of sympathy to come to grips with what I was actually attempting to understand. Now it is impossible for me to read historical documents from this era without noticing the permeating assumptions of empire.

As the imperial economic process of globalized capitalism has unfolded, not only have Inga Clendinnen's historians followed the "camp" of the conquerors, but performances in the public sphere rationalized, justified, and normalized the process to the larger society. The first two chapters provide background for what follows and rely on source material from a public sphere broader than just theater. Secondary works also play a larger role in these background chapters as they began as "thought-pieces" to help me understand the relationship between theater and empire in this early phase. In Chapter One, I show how cultural and literary historians established a direct connection between international market economics – a system dependent upon imperial expansion – and theatrical performances from Shakespeare through the Restoration period. Chapter Two delves into the transfer of this culture of empire as manifested in performance across the Atlantic to the British colonies in the New World. Accompanying this transfer was an increasingly nuanced ideology of classical republicanism and rationalism that was reflected in the public sphere. Chapter Three delves into this ambiguity of empire as thirteen of the North American British colonies rejected controls imposed on their expansion, generating a constitutional crisis. The continuity of an imperial culture in this new "empire republic" – as opposed to the traditional historical approach of trying to identify an "American" culture – is the topic of Chapter Four. Where "politeness" had defined the theater of the British Empire, the Euro-American imperial performances had more of an immediacy to the frontier of the empire. Mythologized Indians and African Americans were a central feature of these performances. The expansion of this imperial culture into the Hudson Valley, over the Alleghenies, and its connection to

the British colony of Canada is discussed in Chapter Five. Also outlined in this chapter is the rise of a hybrid folk culture that includes elements of imperial culture – a reflection of an ongoing process of the democratization of empire in the new republic. Finally, Chapter Six surveys performative elements of this culture as it moved into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, the Gulf Coast and up the Missouri River to the edge of the Great Plains and "Bleeding" Kansas.

Chapter One
Capitalism, Politeness, and Enthusiasm: Empire and the Stage

The political evolution of pre-modern England into an imperial Britain paralleled the evolving economic arrangement of British society both at home and, eventually, in the American colonies. The mythopoeic function of the theater – creating and perpetuating a societal myth through art – reflected the evolving power structure and social arrangement during this period of fairly drastic change.[1] As social, political, and economic structures were realigned by mercantile and capitalist economics beginning in the Tudor period, I argue that theater – both inadvertently and by intent – did much to assuage lingering hesitancy to embrace the new system.

As the new economic system influenced and interacted with the English social system, theater performances became a renowned institution in the expanding British world that included all the peoples of the island of Britain and part of Ireland. Vulnerable to the competing nation-states of imperial Spain, France, and the Netherlands, this wider Britain joined in the expanding search for resources and markets – a search begun on the island itself. Wealth thus obtained – ultimately expressed in the mercantilists' bullion and equated with national defense – motivated the early period of European colonization of the New World. The theater reflected the new forms of business, new social standards expressed as "politeness," and helped to de-humanize the victims of this expansion, be they English or Irish peasants,

[1] For a definition and discussion of "mythopoeic" information presented in the theatrical medium, see Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002).

Native American villagers, or Africans sold and transported as wealth-producing slaves.

This chapter begins by reviewing the initial "pre-capitalist" displacement of peasant farm workers and the farmers themselves as Karl Marx outlined it in his nineteenth-century study of the phenomenon. This expropriation of land created a need to rationalize and justify an economic system that gave a land owning elite disproportionate access to wealth and arbitrary sway with the monarch and in Parliament. Theater performances reflected an emerging "culture of empire" that both rationalized and normalized the new system. The depredations of the new system, inflicted first on the English peasants, were repeated in Ireland and in the New World. Because of that, it is worth a brief tour through the initial economic upheaval in Britain.

In Tudor and Stuart England, traditional society was being transformed by this burgeoning economic order that had begun in the thirteenth-century Mediterranean. Expanded upon by Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch traders, the system demanded sustained economic growth. In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, a play set in ancient Britain during the Roman period that features Posthumus Leonatus, the British protagonist. His closest friends are two Italians, a Frenchman, a Dutchman, and a Spaniard. When the play was written, (c. 1610), merchants from these very countries were chief among those growing the new market economy and investing in British resources and markets. This "historicization" of antiquity with contemporary affairs was an increasingly common device to rationalize the economic changes of the era.[2] The

[2] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* I:4, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works* (Ann Arbor: Borders Group, 2004), 882-883; hereafter referenced as *CW*. For a discussion of historicization as an

stage represented a visible face for an otherwise invisible abstraction which Jean-Christophe Agnew aptly referred to as a "physiognomic metaphor." This self-conscious construction of and by the theater, moving decidedly away from street performance, courtly masque, and ritual, gave rise to the "idea of the play" that represented the "idea of the market."[3]

The growing of grain and farm animals; the expanding of fishing grounds, mining, metalworking, cloth-making, and shipbuilding, were creating networks of buyers and sellers that began replacing local economies and changed the social foundations of work and wealth. Specialization, new farming techniques, higher productivity, and food surpluses generated much literature that, like theater, attempted to get a handle on the radical economic changes. Contentious times meant contentious arguments in the public sphere – a sphere that also generated a reading public and a fairly sophisticated audience for the rising commercial theaters springing up in London.[4]

The capitalist system demanded a degraded and servile workforce to keep labor costs down, a demand that encouraged expansion in a variety of ways, particularly regarding the expropriation of lands. As more large proprietors became invested in the market economy, more and more lands passed into their hands as well

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analytical tool, see Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[3] Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11; Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Penguin, 1962); Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theater as Metaphor* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982), 60-75, 94.

[4] Joyce O. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 3-4.

as those of land speculators. Reacting to this development in the transformative Stuart period, Parliament passed legislation aimed at enforcing a four acre minimum plot with each rural cottage. Capitalists interested in a large, indigent labor pool did not want laborers to be able to become small farmers, so these requirements faded from practice as these interests grew in Parliamentary sway. The Catholic Church was a great proprietor of feudal lands and when the monasteries were suppressed and expropriated during the confiscation of Henry VIII, their residents joined the growing population of the wandering landless. Church estates were given to royal favorites or sold to speculators who usurped the legally guaranteed property of the hereditary sub-tenants, pauperizing many of them.

In the forty-third year of Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1601), a statute was passed introducing the poor-rate, imprisoning individuals who might be termed vagrants. A group of landed proprietors formulated an interpretation of the law, upon which a Sergeant Snigge, who would later be given a judgeship by James I, expounded:

> Some of the more wealthy farmers in the parish have devised a skilful mode by which all the trouble of executing this Act . . . might be avoided. They have proposed that we shall erect a prison in the parish, and then give notice to the neighbourhood, that if any persons are disposed to farm the poor of this parish, they do give in sealed proposals, on a certain day, of the lowest price at which they will take them off our hands; and that they will be authorised to refuse to any one unless he be shut up in the aforesaid prison. The proposers of this plan conceive that there will be found in the adjoining counties, persons, who, being unwilling to labour and not possessing substance or credit to take a farm or ship, so as to live without labour, may be induced to make a very advantageous offer to the parish. If any of the poor perish under the contractor's care, the sin will lie at his door, as the parish will have done its duty by them. We . . . the adjoining freeholders of the county . . . will very readily join in instructing [our] members [of Parliament] to propose an Act to enable the parish to contract with a person to lock up and work the poor; and

> to declare that if any person shall refuse to be so locked up and worked, he shall be entitled to no relief."[5]

Creating a form of slavery imposed upon English citizens, by the English Civil War this poor law was made perpetual. "Poor houses" became so entrenched by William and Mary's reign that in the Scotch parliament of 1698, one Fletcher of Saltoun declared, "The number of beggars in Scotland is reckoned at not less than 200,000. The only remedy that I, *a republican on principle*, can suggest, is to restore the old state of serfdom, to make slaves of all those who are unable to provide for their own subsistence."[6] Eighteenth-century British historian Frederic Morton Eden observed the historical situation, writing that, "The decrease of villenage [non-landowning peasants] seems necessarily to have been the era of the origin of the poor. Manufactures and commerce are the two parents of our national poor." Beginning with the targeting of villenage, the expropriation of the middling agricultural laborer's property that proletarianized, then pauperized, many who were formerly in a respectable situation.[7] Again, this is reflected in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* when he has Guiderius, (unbeknownst to himself the son of the King), refer to his exile in the mountains of Wales as a "prison for a debtor" in its remoteness.[8]

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[5] Quoted in Frederick Engels, ed., Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, reprint (New York: International Publishers, 1992; orig. published in English, 1887, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling), n. 3, 675. See also Robert Blakey, *The History of Political Literature from the Earliest Times* (London, 1855), 84-85.

[6] Quoted in Marx, n. 3, 675-676, italics mine.

[7] Sir Frederic Morton Eden, *The State of the Poor: or an History of the Labouring Classes in England, from the Conquest to the Present Period* (London, 1797); in Marx, ibid.

[8] *William Shakespeare: Complete Works* (Ann Arbor: Borders Group, 2004), 894; (hereafter referenced as *CW)*. For a discussion of historicism, see Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

This economic arrangement was magnified through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century in England. Marx captured the economic spirit of the new "bourgeois" monarchs William and Mary:

> They inaugurated the new era by practising on a colossal scale thefts of state lands, thefts that had been hitherto managed more modestly. These estates were given away, sold at a ridiculous figure, or even annexed to private estates by direct seizure. All this happened without the slightest observation of legal etiquette. The Crown lands thus fraudulently appropriated, together with the robbery of the Church estates, as far as these had not been lost again during the republican revolution, from the basis of the to-day [mid-nineteenth-century] princely domains of the English oligarchy. The bourgeois capitalists favoured the operation with the view, among others to promoting free trade in land, to extending the domain of modern agriculture on the large farm-system, and to increasing their supply of the free agricultural proletarians ready to hand. Besides, the new landed aristocracy was the natural ally of the new bankocracy, of the newly-hatched *haute-finance*, and of the large manufacturers, then depending on protective duties.

Marx goes on to point out that communal property was an ancient institution that had lived on under the veneer of feudalism.[9] This forcible usurpation of the rights to lands that had traditionally been held in common, (hence the "commonwealth"), was a central feature of the transition to mercantilist-capitalism. The concept of the "Ancient Constitution" – be it property arrangements or Common Law – would also be adapted to the new economics and will be discussed below. This process was repeated as the expanding economic empire moved overseas and engaged the native populations.

Nation-states were perhaps the first truly powerful "individuals" of these transforming market societies. Thomas Mun was one who attempted to explain the

[9] Marx, 677; Marx cites Francis William Newman's *Lectures on Political Economy* (London, 1851), and includes his statement: "The illegal alienation of the Crown Estates, partly by sale and partly by gift, is a scandalous chapter in English history . . . a gigantic fraud on the nation," Newman, 129-130.

new market economy of abstract investing to contemporaries. Overlooking domestic consumption as a significant part of market economics, Mun considered foreign trade the key in his paradigm.[10] He also contributed to an argument for the observation of laws governing human activity that were not controlled by a royal sovereign.[11] In his *England's treasure by forraign trade*, Mun wrote:

> Let the meer Exchanger do his worst; Let Princes oppress, Lawyers extort, Usurers bite, Prodigals wast . . . so much Treasure only will be brought in or carried out of a Commonwealth, as the Forraign Trade doth over or under ballance value . . . And this must come to pass by a Necessity beyond all resistance.[12]

Edward Misselden was another early seventeenth century writer who attempted to articulate the new economic situation. He argued that money was a commodity and merchants were the ones who knew when and how to buy and sell it. Its value should not be set by royal fiat, as defenders of the old order such as Assay Master at the English mint, Gerald de Malynes, declared, but by the market. The Commonwealth, in his view, equaled the accumulated private wealth of its members.[13] Misselden's observations were the most liberal of the group and spoke as one "liberated from conventional misconceptions." Where the old "moral economy" had been focused on the Commonwealth and maintaining and accumulating bouillon,

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[10] Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 37-38.

[11] Quoted in ibid., 47.

[12] Ibid., 51.

[13] Ibid., 43-44. The discourse on this topic is extensive. Any review of this literature should include, at the very least, in addition to Marx, Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution: A Social and Economic History of Britain, 1530-1780* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1967); Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972); Charles Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763* (London: Longmans, 1966); F.J. Fisher, "The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser. xxx (1948), 37-50.

Misselden and Mun moved the discourse away from "treasure" and toward commerce. One hundred and fifty years before Adam Smith, these proto-economists demonstrated that bouillon was a commodity, like everything else in the new economy. Such notions were a shift in thinking that was part and parcel of a capitalist revolution.[14]

An obvious example of this phenomenon reflected on the stage and found in *The Merchant of Venice*. Both the moneychanger Shylock and the merchant Antonio are products of this economic arrangement. Shylock's Hebrew identity castes him onto the fringe of Venetian society, making him a "threshold figure" but who, as a merchant and money-lender, is becoming central to an abstract market economy. His counterpart, Antonio, is a merchant of some means whose assets are all on the ocean engaged in the Mediterranean carrying trade. In response to his friend Bassanio's request for a loan, Antonio responds that:

> Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
> Neither have I money nor commodity
> To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
> Try what my credit can in Venice do:
> That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
> To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia [Bassanio's purpose]
> Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
> Where money is; and I no question make
> To have it of my trust or for my sake.15

[14]Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 48-49. For a discussion of a moral economy, see E.P. Thompson, "Moral Economy and the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 76-136.

[15] *CW*, 205.

This passage accentuates the role the Mediterranean market economy was playing in the early seventeenth century, and *The Merchant of Venice* presented this unfamiliar arrangement to an eclectic English audience.[16]

Many in England had long referred to the internal dynamics of English politics as the "empire." But with the expansion of English hegemony into Ulster and particularly with the arrival of the Scottish Stuart king in London in 1603, "empire" began to take on a new meaning and this meaning was represented on the stage.[17] The notion of an expanding empire was advanced during Elizabeth's reign with the attempted colony at Roanoke and the Ulster Plantation. But it was under James Stuart that the physical empire began to impact the psyche of the isle's residents, English and otherwise. The union of England, Wales, Ulster, and now – at least figuratively, with James VI and I – Scotland, the English commonwealth was transforming into a British one. The theater – so important to the public sphere in a pre-café society – presented plays like *King Lear*, *Cymbaline*, and *Elidure*, all of which presented staged "British" rulers who oversaw and expanded the realm while,

[16] For an excellent and succinct discussion of the interaction between pre-modern English folk culture and Shakespearean theater, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 23-24. See also, V.A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1947); Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages: 1300-1660*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1980); Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935); H.C. Gardiner, *Mysteries: An Investigation of the Last Days of the Medieval Religious Stage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).

[17] Richard Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), traces changes in the meaning of "empire" over time.

in the real world, James I was announcing that Britain was "the trve and ancient Name" of the island.[18]

While the playwrights around this time were reflecting these developments on the stage, Shakespeare reportedly had little intent to contribute to the "glory of Tudor England." Nevertheless, the London populace, particularly bourgeois theater-goers, supported the idea of an imperial Britain.[19] The fear of invasion did more than put the island kingdom on the defensive, it led to the creation of a mythic British history in which France, Ireland and indeed, all of Europe and beyond could rightfully be construed as subjects of Britain. The creation of this Britannic "Manifest Destiny" was done through polemical tract (religious and secular), literature, as well as the theater stage.

By the time of James I's assumption of the British crown, a second wave of British consciousness was planted in Ireland and a template was created for overseas expansion.[20] James tended to think of his empire as a defensive mechanism, (i.e., Ulster and Scotland allied with England to prevent Spanish/French mischief in the isles). But many among the growing bourgeoisie who were conscious of and encouraging the growing economic system saw overseas expansion as a potential treasure trove. Shakespeare had Falstaff refer to Mrs. Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as "a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty." Indeed, perhaps Shakespeare

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[18] Quoted in Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1-2; for his comment on "pre-café society," see ibid., 5.

[19] Marshall, 6.

[20] The first was the 1166 colonization of Dublin and the area around it that became known as the "English pale." For the second "invasion," Nicholas Canny provides one of the best discussions in *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-76* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976).

painted Falstaff to match the crassness of economic imperialism when Falstaff utterly disregards the fact that Mrs. Page is married, but notes the wealth possessed by her and her husband: "I will be cheater to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me." Shakespeare has Falstaff reflect the need for markets in the same lines: "[T]hey shall be my East and West Indies, and I shall trade to them both."[21] The potential for wealth production through foreign lands was beginning to be understood by playwrights and their audiences.

The jackpot of bouillon into which the Spanish had stumbled inspired investors in the Virginia Company. Joint-stock companies had led the way toward a mercantile imperium since before Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, the history of private investment in overseas ventures had a long and illustrious history in the Mediterranean, and England was now getting onboard.[22] The Muscovy Company (1555), the Merchant Adventurers of England (1566), the Levant Company (1581), the Roanoke Colony (1585), and the East India Company (1601), had all claimed to represent the interests of the nation, but the primary enrichment belonged to principals and stockholders – a sign of things to come.[23]

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[21] *CW*, 48; Marshall, 42, n. 15. For a contemporary description of Guiana, see Robert Harcourt, *A Relations of a Voyage to Guiana. Describing the Climate, Scituation, Fertilitie, Provisions, and Commodities of that country* (London, 1613); for a modern account, see Joyce Larimer, "The Failure of the English Guiana Ventures 1595-1667 and James I's Foreign Policy," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* XXI (1993), 1-30.

[22] See Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492 (*Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

[23] Harris, 5; Neil Longley York, *Turning the World Upside Down: The War of American Independence and the Problem of Empire* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2003), 1-8.

Mercantile interests kept pushing toward overseas expansion, but religion and the public sphere contributed. Five tracts published in 1609 backed the faltering Virginia Company by quoting scripture, specifically Psalm 72: 8-9: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." A broadsheet was also published depicting two Indians appealing for the "civilizing" force of the empire:

> Once in a State, as of one Stem,
> Mere strangers from Jerusalem,
> As We, were Ye; till others Pity
> Sought, and brought You to that City.
> Dear Britons, now, be You as Kind;
> Bring Light and Sight to Us yet blind:
> Lead Us; by doctrine and Behaviour,
> Into one Sion, to one Saviour.[24]

Such an early depiction of the "white man's burden" gave potential colonists another reason to support the move toward empire. The "civilizing" effects of "modern" commerce, coupled with the proselytizing, even expansionist, tendency of Christianity, gave those who envisioned an expanding economic empire a two-edged rhetorical sword for their cause.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, British imperial expansion was not going particularly well; interest and effort had to be maintained if Britain was to arrive at some new self-perception as an expansive commercial empire. As Samuel Calvert wrote William Trumbull in 1612, "Our own plantations go on, the one doubtfully [Ulster], the other desperately [Virginia]. Ireland with all our money and

[24] Quoted in Marshall: Psalm quote, 20; broadsheet, 19.

pains [is] not yet settled in any fashion to assure us either profit or safety."[25] James I's pacifism also concerned those who stood to profit from national expansion and deepened their dilemma. Three threads joined to reinforce and legitimize the imperium concept: 1) The "proof" that natives of the New World were clearly inferior to Englishmen; 2) The depiction of an ancient mythical Britain that inherited the Roman torch of pax imperii; and 3) The glorification of James's son, Prince Henry, in life and death, installing him into a British pantheon dating back to Roman times. To all three of these ends the stage served its mythopoeic function of the expanding imperial market economy.

One angle regarding the first thread was to conflate these "aliens" with the classical pagans of Greece and Rome. It was easy to deal with, a familiar category and, since most early modern ethnography was written by missionaries espousing a Christian mythology, left these exotic peoples "salvageable" for the proselytizing aspect of this mythology's self-perceived obligation. At least two of the major writers to supply Europeans with ethnographic information on the New World adopted a comparative approach between Native Americans and classical pagans. Bartolemé de las Casas and José de Acosta, writing a century apart, both suggested that missionaries should approach Indians with a mindset that these people were like the ancient Greeks. Employing the "template of error" in antiquity, the Indians, early European "barbarians," and classical paganism were conflated into a singular worldview. Lorenzo Pignoria included an essay on the "Gods of the East and West Indies" in his *Imagini della dei de gli antichi*, a book comparing New and Old World

[25] Quoted in Ibid., 22.

pagans. Engravings of these pagan "gods," hideous creatures, were printed with special attention given to the comparison of the gods of Mexico and Egypt.[26]

On the other hand, the "heathen" aspects of exotic peoples played into the apologists' need to discredit the classicist point of view that competed for the epistemic stage of this "age of discovery." As with paganism, the devil was a known quantity that brought a "body of demonological theory . . . which could provide the ethnographer with the conceptual tools for understanding the otherwise inexplicable, often terrifying behavior of exotic peoples." Terrifying behavior included shamanistic trances, nakedness, uninhibited sex, the occasional example of cannibalism, etc. And, since the Bible and European monarchs particularly paid close attention to genealogy, family trees were an important way of explaining novelty – exotic peoples could be identified as descendants from known quantities of Old Testament or classical times. This method was particularly friendly toward the invention of a past for Native Americans and others who were not supposed to be there, according to the ancient texts. If the ancestors could be conjectured through geneology, it meant that focus could remain on the descendants and provided a welcome distraction from the possibility that traditional sources of information were simply wrong.[27]

Staging the exotic, primitive, and savage rationalized the Atlantic world practice of chattel slavery as well as the commodification of the labor of non-elite whites. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has Trinculo refer to the dusky and exotic

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[26] Michael T. Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Oct. 1981), 521-528.

[27] Ibid., 530-533.

Caliban as a "strange fish" that would bring a pretty penny displayed in London. Caliban is called a fish throughout the play, and in the fifth act the character of Antonio says that this "fish" "is a plain fish, and no doubt marketable." And while it is a moment of humor in the play, the marketing of Native American and African slaves was part of the foundation of imperial economic expansion. As literary scholar Douglas Bruster has noted, "[T]he market found agency through human actors who vivified and extended a commercial ideology."[28]

The ancient and modern were conflated in the European mind in many other ways. One of the most well-known of the scholastic texts of the Renaissance, the *Liber Chronicarum*, or *Nuremberg Chronicle*, depicted events of the classical era in the cities and costumes of northern Europe.[29] The new humanist school of thought, however, which relied upon more empirical information for its speculation, wanted to see the classical texts reprinted without their medieval Christian gloss. The humanists were a practical sort that relied on their own senses and on the senses of those who were actually experiencing the exotic lands without the trappings of the missionaries' zealotry, and their literature came to comprise a secondary education system alongside the scholastic universities that had been predominate since Charlemagne.[30] Nevertheless, Europeans did not observe the New World and her peoples without prejudice nor did they, as a rule, consider non-Europeans, especially those embracing a seemingly simple farmer/hunter-gatherer culture, (the "farmer"

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[28] Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16.

[29] Grafton, 22.

[30] Ibid., 28-29.

aspect of this was downplayed or ignored to maximize "inferiority"), as equals. Indeed, the first several generations of historians in the U.S. saw non-Europeans as bit-part players in a drama unfolding in the English and Anglo-American mind and projected onto and reflected by the stage. The major theme of that drama tied this perception of superiority to an ever-expanding empire based on a perceived Anglo-Roman mythology and a possessive materialism that was restructuring society on a scale of acquisition at once colonial, corporate, and personal.

An ancient British mythology that could be linked to the glory of the Roman Empire was seen in late Elizabethan plays such as *The Lamenable Tragedy of Locrine the Eldest Son of King Brutus*, (Anon, 1591-1595, although some scholars attribute portions of it to Shakespeare). Day's *I The Conquest of Brute* and *II The Conquest of Brute* (1598), the latter likely the same as Henry Chettle's *Brute of Greenshield* (1599); *Uther Pendragon* (Anon., 1597), and William Rankins's *Mulmutius Dunwalle* (1598) all reinforce the notion of the imperial Britain, conflating Welsh folklore with English mythology.[31] For the Jacobean period, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and the anonymously authored *No-body* and *Some-body* reflect playwrights' efforts to nurture a British imperial consciousness. Language validating the Scottish Union permeated these plays. King Lear divides his kingdom and adversely affects the social order in the united British kingdom, making it clear that a foolish and unnecessary division (which included, in the British imperial mind, France and Ireland), would turn the world upside-down. James knew not to divide his kingdoms,

[31] Making "Brute" the original British hero served well the ends of conflating Britain with Rome – an obvious connection given that Britain was once a Roman colony itself; ibid, 56.

and he warned Charles against it. Tristan Marshall points out that the role these plays had in establishing a "British" (vs. English) mentality is illuminated by what came later. These are the beginning of a long and illustrious tradition of "British" theater, made so largely by the expansion of this economic empire. And it is the recurring themes of justified empire and an illustrious British mythic history conflated with imperial Rome that these plays have in common with each other.[32]

Playwright Anthony Munday presented a pageant in London in 1605 that was unabashed in its creation of a British past tied to the Roman empire. *The Triumphs of Reunited Britannia and London* paid homage to the mythic founding of Britain by the Trojan warrior Brute as early as the 12th century B.C. In the preface to the pageant, Munday summarized the history of Britain since the "Great Deluge."[33] Upon Brute's death, Munday writes, the island was divided among his three sons (reminiscent of Charlemagne and his Frankish empire on the continent): Locrine, Camber, and Albanact. These kingdoms became known as Loegrine, Cambria, and Albania, or England, Wales, and Scotland. The first excerpt given here summarizes the action and staging of the pageant:

> On a mount triangular, as the island of Britain itself is described to be, we seat in the supreme place, under the shape of a fair and beautiful nymph, Britannia herself, accosted with Brute's divided kingdoms, in the like female representations, Loegria, Cambria, and Albania. Britannia speaking to Brute her conqueror (who is seated somewhat lower, in the habit of an adventurous, warlike Trojan), tells him that she had still continued her name of Albion, but for his conquest of her virgin honor, which since it was by heaven so appointed, she reckons it to be the very best of her fortunes. Brute shows her what height of happiness she hath attained unto by his victory, being before a

[32] Ibid., 57.

[33] Anthony Munday, *The Trivmphes of re-vnited Britania* (London: W. Jaggard, 1605), 1-5.

> vast wilderness, inhabited by giants, and a mere den of monsters. Goemagot and his barbarous brood being quite subdued, his civil followers first taught her modest manners, and the means how to reign as an imperial lady, building his Troya Nova by the river Thamesis, and beautifying his land with other cities beside.

In this passage, reference to "a vast wilderness inhabited by giants, and a mere den of monsters" underscores European views of the unknown.[34] "Goemagot" is another name for "Gogmagog," the biblical son of Japheth and the giant leader of barbarous Britain slain by Brute in this mythology. This passage, therefore, is a conflation of Welsh folklore, English mythology, Roman imperialism, and the Bible. It continues:

> But then the three virgin kingdoms seem to reprove him, for his overmuch love to his sons, and dividing her (who was one sole monarchy) into three several estates, the hurt and inconvenience whereon ensuing, each one of them modestly delivered unto him . . . Albania [then] bred a second Brute, by the blessed marriage of Margaret, eldest daughter of King Henry VII, to James IV of Scotland, of whom our second Brute, royal King James, is truly and rightfully descended; by whose happy coming to the crown, England, Wales, and Scotland, by the first Brute severed and divided, is in our second Brute reunited, and made one happy Britannia again; peace and quietness bringing that to pass, which war nor any other means could attain to. For joy of which sacred union and combination, Locrine, Camber, and Albanact, figured there also in their antique estates, deliver up their crowns and scepters, applauding the day of this long-wished conjunction, and Troya Nova (now London) incites fair Thamesis and the rivers that bounded the severed kingdoms (personated in fair and beautiful nymphs) to sing paeans and songs of triumph in honor of our second Brute, royal King James.

This then, not unlike Native American myths of familial unions with fish, caribou, or bison, establishes a lineage to Rome and the Bible – the two most revered and enticing mythologies, centering on a male war god, for those striving for centralized

[34] Anthony Grafton with April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992) describes and shows a page from Harmann Schedel's 1493 *Liber Chronicarum* depicting the "monstrous races" that purportedly existed beyond the known world of "Orbis Terrarum," or the perceived global land mass.

power. The characters in this pageant are reflected in those at the beginning of King Lear – the suitors of his daughters, Burgundy, Cornwall, and Albany.

The next excerpt is a conversation between Brute and his sons, including Troya Nova, (New Troy, AKA London) from beyond the tomb telling their joy at witnessing the emergence of this "second Brute," James I:

> BRUTE: See, after so long slumbering in our tombs
> Such multitudes of years, rich poesy
> That does revive us to fill up these rooms
> And tell our former age's history
> (The better to record Brute's memory)
> Turns now our accents to another key,
> To tell old Britain's new-born happy day.
> . . .
> And what fierce war by no means could effect,
> To re-unite those sundered lands in one,
> The hand of heaven did peacefully elect
> By mildest grace, to seat on Britain's throne
> This second Brute, than whom there else was none:
> Wales, England, Scotland, severed first by me,
> To knit again in blessed unity.
> . . .
>
> LOCRINE: England, that first was called Loegria
> After my name, when I commanded here,
> Gives back her due unto Britannia,
> And doth her true-born son in right prefer
> Before divided rule, irregular;
> Wishing my brethren in like sort resign,
> A sacred union once more to combine.
>
> CAMBER: I yielded long ago, and did in heart
> Allow Britannia's first created name,
> My true-born Brute have ever took her part
> And to their last hour will maintain the same.
>
> ALBANACT: It is no marvel that you gladly yield
> When the all-ruling power doth so command,
> I bring that monarch now into the field

With peace and plenty in his sacred hand
To make Britannia one united land:
And when I brought him, aftertimes will say,
It was Britannia's happy holiday.

TROYA NOVA: Then you fair swans in Thamesis that swim,
And you choice nymphs that do delight to play
On Humber and fair Severn, welcome him
In canzons, jigs, and many a roundelay,
That from the north brought you this blessed day,
And in one tuneful harmony let's sing,
"Welcome King James, welcome bright Britain's king!"[35]

Munday, a well-established playwright in the Tudor-Stuart court, presented this pageant to honor the ascension of James VI and I to the throne, an event that represented a *de facto* union of the island and validated this new "empire." In this case, each participant of the empire "speaks" its approval of the union.

Another example of connecting Britain (the new "supra-England") to the glories of Rome was seen in William Rowley's *A Shoe-Maker, A Gentleman*, written between 1607 and 1609. The events of the play show that Rome's glorious past is also Britain's. Maximinus and Dioclesion admit Britain's part in helping to protect the empire from the Vandals and the Goths. The conquest of Britain by the Romans was a help to Britain, according to this mythology. The play accentuates a British patriotic hagiography as well. The sons of the British King conquered by the Romans flee the encroaching legions and escape. They adopt the names Crispinus and Crispianus, the first ends up fathering the child of Leodice, Emperor Maximinus's daughter, and the latter leads conscripted Britains into battle in France abetting the Roman forces, where they are victorious. A conflation of symbols used by Rome

[35] Munday, 10-12

with those used by Britain occurs, an eagle emblazoned on the imperial standard, for example. Thus is Britain "saved" by its association with Rome, making it a logical candidate as a new imperial power.[36]

Mercantile economics, simply defined for purposes of this study, meant a state-controlled economy dominated by notions of national treasure and the acquisition of bullion. This system and its pursuit of resources and markets through colonization and empire was a sort of proto-"free-market" capitalism. The latter emerged before it was acknowledged and eventually forced a reformation of controlling forces and a restructuring of the feudal class system (discussed below). As control over the mercantile economy flagged, a kind of xenophobia emerged in the conservative writings of people like Gerald de Malynes and later the French physiocrats.[37] Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* represents merchant/artisan relations (and the implications of international markets), that scholar Alexander Pope referred to it as "pandering to tradesmen and mechanics." Those of a conservative bent felt that foreign commerce was a sort of pathological invasion of the body politic. Ideas of foreign disease became enmeshed with transnational capitalism and acted paradoxically to abet arguments for empire. The questions then were much the same as they are now: was there a sense of moral responsibility for one's transactions, or were demands of an amoral supra-national economic system those to which one must submit? Plays of this era often, literary scholar Jonathan Harris tells us, "stage a

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[36] Marshall, 64-65; Marshall provides a lengthy and convincing discussion on the conflation of British and Roman mythological imagery in the theater and elsewhere.

[37] Appleby, *Economic Thought*, passim; Yves Charbit and Arundhati Virmani, "The Political Failure of an Economic Theory: Physiocracy," *Population* 57:6 (November – December, 2002), 855-883.

contest between individual agency . . . and ineluctable subjection to external control."[38]

Four plays of the late Elizabethan / early Jacobean period adopt the moral economy as the center of debate. Stemming from Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*'s Deuteronomic interdiction of usury, Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*; Robert Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*; *Travels of Three English Gentlemen*, by Wilkins, Rowley and Day, as well as Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, all deal with the "taint" of foreign trade in the transnational economy. Indeed, Shylock would become a nearly universal allegory for the evils of money and usury and their detrimental affect on the economic health of the commonwealth.[39]

The conflation of Britain with Rome won the day over conservative fears of the loss of a moral economy and the consequences of transnational capitalism. The play *Tom A Lincoln*, discovered among the papers of Sir John Coke of Derbyshire (1563-1644) in 1973, expresses this conflation quite conveniently. A mythical British past validated an aggressive, imperial British present in this play. First staged probably in 1611, it tells of the illegitimate son of King Arthur on an imperial conquest of Europe searching for his father's identity. In its glorification of war, the play speaks of King Arthur's Britain as a neo-Rome and the son – dubbed the "Red Rose Knight" – ventures into France, Spain, Italy and beyond to Africa in his quest.[40] John Webster's *The White Devil*, offers a "vitriolic condemnation of power and

[38] Harris, *Sick Economies*, 27-28, 31-32.

[39] Ibid., 54.

[40] Marshall, *Theater and Empire*, 98-100.

corruption," presumably of the Catholic Church. The hero of the tale, Prince Giovanni – Henry Stuart's (son of King James I) allegory – demonstrates his simple ideas of honor and dignity through imperial war, "Might not a child of good discretion be leader to an army?" His honor and dignity extends to his willingness to release his prisoners, who will not resume the fight when they realize the righteousness of the young prince's cause. *The Valiant Welshman*, probably written by Robert Alleyne, encapsulates the message that the "foreign" hero (in this case the Welshman Caradoc) can impart a noble air to his countrymen by entering into the service of Britain in the name of maintaining peace. William Rowley's *Birth of Merlin, or, The Child Hath Found His Father*, is steeped in British "conquest, glory, and martial aspirations." The humor of the play added to its attractiveness, for example when the Clown and his pregnant sister, who is Merlin's mother, appear onstage, the Clown introduces them as a "couple of Great Brittains, you may see by our bellies, sir" (III.i.60).[41] Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* moved toward uniting the mythical British past with the historical present. Tristan Marshall quotes at length the exposition Shakespeare has Thomas Cranmer give on the Scotch successor to Queen Elizabeth, some of which I include here:

> As when
> The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
> Her ashes new create another heir
> As great in admiration as herself,

[41] Ibid., 102-108. Marshall's chapter on "The true Pantheon" of British history as presented during this era is replete with examples of the creation of a British mythos which is inherently that of an expansionist, imperial state. The death of Prince Henry changed the course of British history; there was no love lost between the people of England and Spain and war with Spain would have been likely had he lived to see his ascension to the throne. Advocates of military force and empire were forced to look for other avenues to achieve their goals upon the death of Henry. The Prince lived on, nonetheless, as an ersatz messianic martyr in the eyes of this faction.

So shall she leave her blessedness to one
(When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness)
Who from the sacred ashes of her honour
Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,
And so stand fix'd. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
That were the servants to this chosen infant,
Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him;
Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
His honour and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations. He shall flourish,
And like the mountain cedar, reach his branches
To all the plains about him: our children's children
Shall see this, and bless heaven.

Rowley's play has Merlin make the prediction although it is set in a mythic past. The rhetoric parallels both classical and biblical texts:

But of your Son, thus Fate and *Merlin* tells,
All after times shall fill their Chronicles
With fame of his renown, whose warlike sword
Shall pass through fertile *France* and *Germany*,
Nor shall his conquering foot be forc'd to stand,
Till *Romes* Imperial Wreath hath crown'd his Fame
With Monarc of the West, from whose seven hills
With Conquest, and contributory Kings,
He back returns to inlarge the Brittain bounds,
His heraldry adorn'd with thirteen Crowns
(. . .)
He to the world shall add another Worthy,
And as a Loadstone for his prowess, draw
A train of Marshal Lovers to his Court:
It shall be then the best of Knight-hoods honor,
At *Winchester* to fill his Castle Hall,
And at his Royal Table sit and feast
In warlike orders, all their arms round hurl'd,
As if they meant to circumscribe the world. (IV.v.104-13, 115-22) [42]

That the day would soon come when the sun would "never set on the British Empire" makes the theater, in this case, seem quite prescient, indeed.

[42] Ibid., 109-110.

When it is seen as a fundamental element of that expansionist, possessive materialism that created a market economy to begin with, the prescience of the theater is less mysterious. The old moral economic system was fading as land use for profit came to dominate the thinking of the day. Shakespeare contemporary John Moore's reply to those who were increasingly asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" was that "although thou are a *civill Owner*, yet thou are a *spiritual Usurper*." The property rights of those who were usurping lands that had been traditionally held more or less communally and using them for private gain has largely been assumed in American historiography, an assumption that is transferred to property ownership in the colonies and subsequently the United States. But contemporary opposition to the process as it occurred in England is exemplified in the record of people like John Moore. In observing the decline of the moral economy, Moore spoke of the poor as a reason for people to overcome their own selfishness, adding that the Leicestershire enclosures buy "the poore for silver . . . make chaffer and merchandise of them for gain and profit: they use them as the doe beasts, keep them or put them off for advantage: they buy them and sell them, as may best serve their turns to get by them."[43]

But the commercial theater, being a part of the rising market economy, inspired another contemporary to write:

> The theatre is your poets' Royal Exchange [a type of proto-stock market set up in London], upon which their Muses – that are now turned to merchants – meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware then words – plaudits and the breath of the great beast which, like the threatening of two cowards, vanish all into air.[44]

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[43] John Moore, *A scripture-word against enclosure (*London: 1656), 42; quoted in Appleby, 63. E.P. Thompson, "Moral Economy," passim.

[44] Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Horn-Book* (London: 1609); quoted in Bruster, 7.

Sir Francis Bacon argued that usury, that staple of market economics, had a negative effect, drawing men away from their true callings and inducing a "drug-like dependence on money not earned."[45]

As radical and reactionary forces began pushing Britain toward a Civil War, the debate between a moral and a market economy evolved into a debate over the market economy alone. The prospect of personal enrichment, which was rapidly becoming a new path to power, was a seemingly ineluctable force. Thomas Hobbes wrote extensively on the dangers of democracy in such an arrangement and control would need to be reasserted by economic elites that included the Crown. In his study of inherent assumptions in the writings of influential English writers in this period, C.B. MacPherson gives insight into those ephemeral aspects of society contemporaries take for granted. Thomas Hobbes' views on the self-interests of human beings is fairly well-known: "because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense." Men, these "self-moving and self-directing appetitive machines," seek continual success in obtaining their desires.[46] There are two kinds of power, Hobbes observed; "original, or natural" power – the skills with which one is born; and "instrumental" power – those powers acquired from others: "Riches, Reputation, Friends, and secret workings of God, which men call Good Luck."[47] But the assumption that Professor MacPherson brings to light is that the striving for power over others as a fundamental

[45] Appleby, 69; the quote is hers.

[46] Quoted in MacPherson, 33.

[47] Ibid., 35.

feature of society requires a model of society which permits invasion of an individual's power by other individuals. This is accomplished in a so-called "civil" society by non-violent invasion: when an individual's labor is commodified and he is forced to sell it because it is all he has to sell. In such a society, MacPherson argues, there is not merely a market economy, but the society itself is a market – a market society. Labor is no longer an expression of an individual's personality, but a "possession" that is alienable.[48]

The acting of the players on the London Renaissance theater stage was now, as a result, an alienable commodity. The attention paid to receipts began to outweigh considerations of artistic merit, although it certainly encouraged increased production.[49] The genius of the Shakespearean stage and the seeming timelessness of many of its "products" were rooted in the interweaving of the impact of a rising transnational market economy with the everyday life of a broad spectrum of society. Thomas Jonson, in *Bartholomew Fair*, first presented in 1614, the Scrivner reads an "Articles of Agreement" between the Spectators or Hearers" and the "Author of Bartholomew Fair" – i.e., a contract was announced at the beginning of the performance guaranteeing that certain expectations would be met. In the preface to Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* that countered the arguments of theater's opponents, an actor announced that if "the vain names of comedies were changed for the titles of commodities," theater's opponents would "flock to them," and when the author had died, those same opponents would "scramble" to cash in on them.

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48 Ibid., 46-48.

49 Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 11-15.

Political economic discourse evolved into a dichotomy of market economy positions that both incorporated and abandoned aspects of the argument for a moral economy. The stage reflected this paradigmatic shift to a full-fledged "market society," providing "a laboratory of and for the new social relations of agricultural and commercial capitalism." As theater scholar Douglas Bruster points out, the stage was not a proxy market, but a real one.[50]

Such statements are supported by the fact that as many as fifty million people attended the English Renaissance theater between 1570 to 1640.[51] In its reflection of this rising market society, theater represented elements of folk culture as commodities.[52] French scholar Jacques Attali notes the unruly aspect of theater and the arts in general as well as how the lovers of order and control sought to keep them in line.[53] Commodified, Renaissance theater was, in effect, controlled by the desire of the theater-going population to assuage their anxiety and explain the capitalist revolution through a part of the revolutionary engine itself. The attraction of the new possessive / materialist paradigm created an irresistible force that brought all who drew near into its vortex. Different world views and conflicting values that were incompatible with market society began to be lost or, as Attali would have it, banished.[54]

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50 Bruster, 8-9.

51 Greenblatt estimates around 1500-2000 attendees a day when the Globe was active. See *Will in the World*, 12.

52 Ibid., 10.

53 Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi, seventh ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, orig. pub. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), passim, but especially p. 74 regarding the authoritarian effort to control the affects of street musicians in France in the nineteenth century.

54 Ibid., 4-5.

Stephen Greenblatt underscores this theme in a discussion on the link between the role the Coventry Hock Tuesday folk play, presented for the Queen in a visit to Kenilworth, twelve miles from Stratford during Shakespeare's youth. The traditional play represented English women attacking and slaying Danish invaders during the Anglo-Saxon period. The role of this play, as in the role of theater generally during the rise of an increasingly imperial market society, was to maintain a sense of nationalism and keep discontent with the ruling class at bay. Indeed, it would become a common theme in the defense of the theater against increasingly strident Protestant opposition. The Hock Tuesday performance was, Greenblatt observes:

> based on history (grounded on "story"), it is a traditional form of entertainment, it is free from ideological contamination and immorality, and it is a distraction from potentially dangerous thoughts, "worse meditations." That is, members of the audience who might otherwise be plotting mischief – brooding on injustice, for example, or longing for the old religion, or hatching rebellion – would have their minds safely occupied by the spectacle of the ancient massacre of the Danes.[55]

Another significant trait of the market society was the way the commodification of that natural world caused humanity to become detached from it. The crowding of London by those forced off the land created deplorable and desperate conditions that turned people into pauperized labor commodities. Regarding new maps that depicted this new London, historian Lawrence Manley wrote that "the cultural facts of urban life began to be conceptually opposed to nature, as the human status once claimed by the city began to be appropriated to individual observers situated in an unnaturally changeful, even monstrous, landscape."[56] The

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55 Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 44.

56 Lawrence Manley, "From Matron to Monster: Tudor-Stuart London and the Languages of

contribution of the overcrowding of London to the dramatic literature heightened a general understanding of the transformative powers of the market society coming to the fore.[57] Such dramas included Edward Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*; Thomas Jonson's *The Alchemist*; and Shakespeare's *Cariolanus*.[58] All was commodity, and commodity was all – the increased opportunity to acquire personal wealth for those so inclined, reinforced the transformation.

The need for this economic revolution to expand in search of new markets and resources was as fundamental to its continued success as was the rise of an urban proletariat to mass-produce finished goods. When the British Empire expanded and colonized in the New World, market society, in its various stages of development, was the dominant paradigm in the colonies. Theater, while burgeoning in the Mother Country, was slow to come to the colonies in the early stages of the process. The theater of the pulpit and the battlefield were more often front and center as the struggle for control and autonomy among the various groups played out in North America.

Yet, in Britain and eventually in the colonies, stock plays of the Shakespearean (to 1643), Restoration (1660-1714), and Augustan (1714-1776, although influenced greatly by the 1737 Licensing Act) periods continued to normalize market society and economic empire.[59] One way it did this was by

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Urban Description," in Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier, eds., *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 350.

57 Bruster, 22.

58 Ibid., 37.

59 Since this is a study of the function and meaning of theater in what I am calling imperial

portraying the notion of a powerful work ethic. Slavery was for non-citizens, but if wealth was to be produced, citizens, too, must be convinced to work at something more than a leisurely pace. After all, they were selling their labor, and efficiency was a point of contention between buyer and seller. Also, mercantile economics required wealth producers to exhibit loyalty to the Mother Country. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that popular plays conflating morality, production, and loyalty were staged. Not only did the "politeness" of genteel society separate successful strivers from those less affluent, it nurtured a type of morality that dovetailed with the emerging evangelical Methodism and Calvinism of the so-called "Great Awakening."

Nicholas Rowe's tragedy *The Fair Penitent* (1703), a stock play in both England and the colonies, was a moral tale of loyalty among friends and kin. The intended lesson is learned from Calista who, in a moment of weakness, gives herself to a man who roughly resembles the "Cavalier" stock of mid-seventeenth century England, (i.e., an aristocratic "dandy" representing the corruption of the Old Order and not her properly "intended" beau). As a result, in a deep bitterness and ritual necromancy that manifests a sublime pathos, she consigns herself to anguish and, ultimately, suicide. Not only herself, but her father Sciolto, finding the humiliation unbearable, is "forced" to take his own life in consequence of her recklessness.

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market society, I do not go over the well-trod ground of documenting plays and playhouses, although that information is vital to this study. Odai Johnson and William J. Burling have done much to solidify what we can know about plays and playhouses in British colonial North America. See Johnson and Burling, eds., *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001). Also, Charles Durang, son of dancer John Durang and theater historian, wrote that Lewis Hallam's company of players brought with them to the colonies some twenty-four plays in 1752, the plays under discussion in this section are from that group. See Charles Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage between the Years 1749 and 1855* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch, 1868; first published as a serial, 1852), 4.

Turgid in its verse and morose in its dark tragedy, the play's spirit is captured in the last few lines of the *Epilogue*, delivered by one of the players at the end of the performance:

> If you would e'er bring constancy in fashion,
> You men must first begin the reformations.
> Then shall the golden age of love return,
> No turtle [dove] for her wand'ring mate shall mourn
> No foreign charms shall cause domestic strife,
> But ev'ry married man shall toast his wife;
> Phyllis shall not be to the country sent,
> For carnivals in town to keep a tedious lent;
> Lampoons shall cease, and envious scandal die,
> And all shall live in peace like my good man and I.[60]

Faithful couples should preserve the sanctity of marriage (and national loyalty) against "foreign charms." Husbands would not have to send well-behaved wives to the country during the carnival season if they themselves were faithful. If the "fair penitent" and her father were any indication, the rules of "politeness" that the bourgeois class was to follow, or at least appear to follow, bore potentially grave consequences for their violation. And while the moral tale is less than subtle, the final death scene conjures up images of Romeo and Juliet's finale, although in the case it is father and daughter who lie dead, guilty of unforgivable social violations.

Equally grave were the violations of the polite code of fastidiousness. This was demonstrated in *The London Merchant*, a play by George Lillo debuted in 1731. A jeweler by trade and member of the London merchant class, Lillo's dedication to his MP Sir John Eyles who, among other things, helped raise the South Sea Company out of insolvency, is an indication of the solidarity of the rising merchant class with

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60 Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*, in Wilson, ed., *Six Eighteenth-Century Plays*, 55.

commercial theater.[61] Regarding the moral obligations of drama, he attributes to playwright John Dryden the statement that tragic poetry was "the most excellent and most useful kind of writing, the more extensively useful the moral of any tragedy is, the more excellent that piece must be of its kind." Usefulness was a key to Lillo as he summoned forth the concept of utilitarianism, apparently in common circulation, in this dedication some seventeen years before the birth of Jeremy Bentham:[62]

> [T]hat tragedy is so far from losing its dignity by being accommodated to the circumstances of the generality of mankind that it is more truly august in proportion to the extent of its influence, and the numbers that are properly affected by it. As it is more truly great to be the instrument of good to many, who stand in need of our assistance, than to the very small part of that number.[63]

Citing the precedent of the moral reforming of Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, Lillo said that while many of the Restoration and post-Restoration dramas had served as a moral reform impulse for the bourgeois and "ruling" classes, there was a decided need for reform literature aimed at the lower classes – apprentices, for example.[64] Lillo's *The London Merchant or, The History of George Barnwell* is a moral instruction play based on a folksong "The Ballad of George Barnwell."[65] In both the

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61 The "South Sea Bubble" was one of the first major financial scandals perpetrated in the emerging "market society" of the British Empire. See, for example, Malcolm Balen, *The Secret History of the South Sea Bubble: The World's First Great Financial Scandal* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003); John Carswell, *The South Sea Bubble* (Dover, NH: Alan Sutton, 1993); Peter M. Garber, *Famous First Bubbles: The Fundamentals of Early Manias* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

62 This was not a new concept, but Bentham's development of it was unique. Among other things, he developed the difference between the individual and social "hedonistic calculi." He himself said he had gotten the idea from Joseph Priestly, a "rational dissenter" of eighteenth century Britain and supporter of the colonists' complaints under George III. See, for example, James Steintrager, *Bentham* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

63 Lillo, "Introduction" to *The London Merchant*, in Wilson, ed., *Six Eighteenth-Century Plays*, 182.

64 Ibid., 183-184.

65 There is a version of the ballad, too extensive to reproduce here, at

play and the ballad, Barnwell is a young apprentice who finds himself in over his head on the London street. By the end of Act I, Scene 2, the corrupting temptress (Sarah) Millwood has Barnwell, a young, naïve apprentice, eating out of her hand, so to speak, in spite of the fact that they have only just met. This parallels the pace of the ballad, but ballads routinely "cut to the chase," while such a development so early in the play seems contrived and wooden, resulting in a kind of pastiche of market society values overlaying a folk narrative. In both texts, Millwood ultimately corrupts Barnwell completely. In the play she talks him into murdering his Master for money, whereas in the ballad the Master is spared but Barnwell himself contrives to steal money from his uncle to maintain favor with Millwood. The discovery of the crime by the uncle leads Barnwell to "beat his brains out of his [uncle's] head," making Barnwell a fugitive. Millwood ultimately betrays Barnwell, but in the ballad, he reports her to the sheriff for abetting the murder and she is hanged. In both, Barnwell is also executed. The play depicts Barnwell as betraying the bright future his loyal master had initially seen in him. The ballad, however, gives Barnwell more agency and Millwood, the *femme fatale*, is more clearly the culprit, Barnwell being at the mercy of his immature love/lust and misplaced desire to provide for her. The play's appeal to the bourgeois class seeking production and loyalty from the hired help is apparent, and Lillo's "domestic tragedy" reflects the merchant class's need for this portrayal on the theater stage.[66]

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http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/classes/434/geweb/BALLADOF.htm, including a discussion of the differences between the ballad and the play.

66 Folksong scholar Francis Child indexes "George Barnwell" as a song type originally collected as "Young Redin," from one Miss E. Beattie, a native of the Mearnssheer region of Scotland. It is essentially the same story featuring a Scottish seamen. See Child, *English and Scottish Ballads* (New York: Phinney, Blakeman and Mason, 1860), 213. For further commentary on *The London*

In the ongoing debate over the morality of the theater that reached a fever pitch in Philadelphia and points north, theater had to be "sold" as a potentially moralizing force.[67] Lillo's play was also influential in the development of the early stages of melodrama in Europe, especially Germany. These "sentimental" dramas, like *The London Merchant*, with Manichean characterizations reminiscent of folktales, developed into the "fairy tale" melodramas of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[68] This genre would eventually, for a time, work against some of the newly-created assumptions of the bourgeoisie, particularly during the "Age of Revolution" and represent a democratizing force in the early republic, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Such moral instruction, in addition to justifying theater to its opponents, served to bifurcate the bourgeoisie consciousness from its involvement in the buying and selling of slaves, the usurpation of lands in the Old and New Worlds, and the amassing of fortunes thus obtained, while large numbers of people, native and foreign, suffered acutely from the adverse consequences. In the New World, it is true that working class and yeomen colonists tended to fare better than their compatriots in the Mother Country, but only because Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans suffered the brunt of the capitalist / mercantilist economy in their stead.

Merchant, see Lothar Fietz, "On the Origins of English Melodrama in the Tradition of Bourgeois Tragedy and Sentimental Drama: Lillo, Schröder, Kotzebue, Sheridan, Thompson, Jerrold," in Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 84.

67 For the relationship between Puritanism and the theater in England see Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Past and Present Publication, 1980).

68 Fietz, 84, 91.

The relative egalitarian society that existed in colonial North America was a white citizenry – originating abroad – supported in large part by a largely dark-skinned underclass and living on land usurped, often violently, from dark-skinned people who were seen as foreign nations in their own homeland.[69] In short, it was an empire that subjected people to slavery and war in order to maintain the relatively egalitarian light-skinned society that, to a greater extent than the previous social paradigm, championed social fluidity, individual rights, and libertarian economics. This paradox became institutionalized because theater, in part, made the latter of these into a societal assumption while sugar-coating the former.

One of the chief motivating factors in this economy was acquisition of consumer goods as well as prestige. Both were means for being accepted into the "polite" society that was steadily usurping the political power of the old aristocratic combinations. "Politeness" and prestige, in particular, were the principle currency of the colonial playhouse. Being seen at the theater was essential to the process of being accepted as a striver among strivers.[70] The rising influence of the merchant and his self-consciousness with that power was seen in a variety of ways. Nineteenth-century historian J.A. Spencer provided a vivid description of the home of a *nouveau riche* eighteenth-century Bostonian merchant:

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69 See, for example, Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); and Eric Williams' classic study *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Capricorn, 1944). A good place to start for newer works on this topic is Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), and Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialisms* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

70 For being seen at the playhouse as social capital, see Johnson, *Absence and Memory*, esp. 57-117.

> There was a great hall ornamented with pictures and a great lantern and a velvet cushion in the window-seat that looked into the garden. In the hall was placed a large bowl of punch from which visitors might help themselves as the entered. On either side was a large parlor, a little parlor or study. These were furnished with mirrors, oriental rugs, window curtains and valance, pictures, a brass clock, red leather back chair, and a pair of huge brass and-irons. The bedrooms were well supplied with feather beds, warming pans and every other article that would now be thought necessary for comfort or display. The pantry was well filled with substantial fare and delicacies. Silver tankards, wine cups and other articles were not uncommon. Very many families employed servants, and in one we see a Scotch boy valued among the property and invoiced at £14. Negro slaves also often formed part of a New England household of that day. Even before this period, in the matter of dress, certain of the ladies were eager to copy the London and Paris fashions . . . [eager] to learn *what dress the queen is in*, and to copy it in all haste.[71]

There is not much in this view that retains a sense of a puritanical "moral economy" of a religious fundamentalist society, nor of the "public virtue" of civic republicanism that had found advocates during and after the English Civil War. This was an expression of a proliferating consumer society where the acquisition of wealth and status by private individuals became an assumption that served, in some respects, as a kind of quasi-religion.[72]

Compare that to the *Preface* written by actor Anthony Aston, credited with being the first professional English strolling player in North America. Variously said to have arrived in 1701 or 1703, this preface was the introduction to *The Fool's Opera; or, the Taste of the Age*:

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71 J.A. Spencer, *History of the United States. From the Earliest Period to the Adminstration of James Buchanan*. (New York: Johnson, Fry, and Co., 1858), 215-216.

72 The burgeoning materialism of the age has been documented elsewhere; see Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988); Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992); Cary Carson, et.al., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994); Johnson, *Absence and Memory*, especially Chapter Three, "The Anatomy of Desire," 57-92. The playhouses, as well as the church, particularly the Protestant variety, were the public spheres of this quasi-religion.

> My merry hearts, you are to know me as a gentleman, lawyer, poet, actor, soldier, sailor, exciseman, publican, in England, Scotland, Ireland, New York, East and West Jersey, Maryland, Virginia (on both sides Cheesapeek), North and South Carolina, South Florida, Bahamas, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and often a coaster by all the same . . . After many vicissitudes I arrived at Charles Towne [Charleston, SC] full of lice, shame, poverty, nakedness and hunger – turned player and poet and *wrote one play* on the subject of the country.[73]

The sense of libertarian Renaissance man is very strong here in Aston's prologue and indicative of an attitude about class that transcended politeness. Aston's presence in the southern colonies, including Jamaica and Barbados, reveals a penchant for novelty, spectacle and sensation – increasingly in demand among theater-goers, bourgeois or otherwise, and met by "varieties" that filled the entre-act intervals of the colonial stage.[74] Indeed, his *Fool's Opera* fits that sort of bill nicely as a "ballad opera" – relatively short with numerous songs set to popular melodies.[75] While Aston can be seen as a bellwether for social changes to come, his presence in the historical record also raises the question of the place of actors on the "politeness" social hierarchy. Odai Johnson notes that actors of good reputation and talent were accepted into polite society – as actors – but if they left their profession, their social movement would most likely be in a downward direction rather than a lateral one.

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73 Quoted in Hornblow, 33. This seems to have been, in part, Aston's stock preface. A very similar passage, without the bit about the lice and hunger, prefaces his *A Sketch of the Life of Anthony Aston, Written by Himself* (London: T. Payne, 1731), 20; reprinted in *Church Music and Musical Life in Pennsylvania in the Eighteenth Century*, Philadelphia: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1926-47), Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 119. 1703 appears to be the more accurate date for Aston's arrival in America.

74 Aston was celebrated primarily in Charleston and Jamaica, in the New World, and he was known in England and Ireland as well. See Eola Willis, *Charleston Theater in the Eighteenth Century* (Columbia, SC: State Printer, 1924), Chapter 1; Wright, *Revels*, 8; Odai Johnson and William J. Burling, *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 23, 29, 97.

75 Wilson, *Six Plays*, ix; Aston, "Fool's Opera," collected in *Church Music*, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 103-118. The "democratization" of the theater is treated below.

More than non-actors, their performance of "politeness" was as much for social recognition as it was for making a living – the two were inseparable.[76]

Another example that heightens this class ambiguity is the surviving memoir of Charlotte (Cibber) Charke, daughter of acclaimed actor, playwright and manager Colley Cibber of Covent Garden Theatre. Charke was something of an "outlaw" to polite society. Educated and reared in a relatively well-to-do and well-regarded family, her independent outlook gave her valuable survival skills, but an early ill-fated marriage to musician Richard Charke led to her rejection by her famous father. Apparently quite talented as an actress and singer, Charlotte's husband left her after she became impregnated with their daughter six months into their marriage. Apparently, he was a philanderer and she was a lesbian. In any case, without the protection of her father's money and position, her memoir tells of her various exploits to survive in and around London, engaging in everything from acting at Covent Garden (until her "fall"), to puppet shows, to operating a grocery. Her life and memoir reveal the degree to which conformity to class-related standards and "politeness" was required for one to maintain one's position in this new and more fluid social arrangement – social mobility meant an easier *de*scent and well as *as*cent.[77]

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76 Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 84. This is particularly observable in the proliferation of "drinking clubs" or "gentlemen's clubs" like the "Sublime Society of Beef Steaks," which was centered around Covent Garden Theater in London. Actors could ingratiate themselves to the bourgeoisie, and even thrive in "high" society. This is discussed further in Chapter Five, below. See Walter Arnold, *The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks* (London: Bradbury, Evans, & Co., 1871).

77 Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlote Charke (Youngest Daughter of Colley Cibber, Esq*., Leonard R.N. Ashley, ed. (Gainseville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969, orig. pub., London, 1755). See also Philip E. Baruth, ed., *Introducing Charlotte Charke* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

The concept of "politeness" as socio-economic criterion has a history that reveals much about the rise and development of so-called bourgeois society and class structure as it comes down to us today. "Politeness," being educated and attuned to the kinds of issues both salient and fashionable to the rising bourgeois class as well as the traditional landed aristocracy, provided a sort of test for upward mobility in this fluid social arrangement. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), dismayed by the stoic nature of classical republicanism – i.e., frugal, modest, a strong sense of public service – but supportive of the basic concept, assimilated the notion of "politeness" into his writings on republican ideology.[78] This conflation of republicanism with acquisition in Whig discourse, historian Lawrence Klein has observed, not only explains Shaftesbury's popularity but helped to distinguish between patrician and plebian classes that were becoming dangerously close (some felt) to amalgamation, especially in the emerging public sphere of the theater.[79] These writings were influential and gave that cluster of politicos known collectively as Whigs, many of whom were among the *nouveau riche* in the age of Walpole, a reason to enjoy the fruits of liberty without being ashamed of their wealth. Shaftesbury saw this "politeness" as part of a cultural aesthetic that could bring individuals engaged in bourgeois acquisition to a more virtuous sense of themselves and their fellow strivers. But it also separated those who had had the opportunity of

78 The relationship between republicanism, whiggism, and the theater are discussed in the next chapter.

79 Lawrence E. Klein, "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Historical Journal* 32, 384-388. For the emerging public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

"polite learning" and the willingness to "perform" it in public from those who had only one of these or neither. The fluency of one's performed politeness was then interpreted by a majority in both groups is an indication of an individual's "value" in a commodified cultural environment. Facilitated by the theater as both arena for and teacher of politeness, this cultural aesthetic helped to define a class system that both imitated and superceded the feudal society and canonized the bourgeois staple of fluid, untitled wealth, i.e., capitalism.

The association of politeness with the mechanics of acting reveals another generally unrealized connection, that between the goals of politeness and emerging acting styles. As historian Klein has shown, politeness was to be reflected for the bourgeois boxes, "taught" to the middling pit, and introduced to the plebian gallery, but those setting up this arrangement – the managers, impresarios, and players – had to sell tickets. Theater may have been patronized by the "independent" classes, but that was not the same thing as a subsidy. In order for the message of the play to strike home, and for popular approval to be gained, an intense level of emoting previously unheard of on the boards was needed if the company was to succeed.

The religious revival known as the "Great Awakening" encompasses the second quarter or so of the eighteenth century and had a manifold effect on the culture of the British Empire. Influential on the broader society's emerging class system was the Methodist adoption of a "class system" for studying the Bible during the years of the Wesleys and Whitefield. According to this class system, there were three types of members in this religious social movement: 1) "Exhorters," who have authority to hold meetings featuring the trademark "fire and brimstone" sermons and

prayers – e.g., George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards; 2) Local preachers, laypersons who kept the "embers burning" at the local level; and 3) Itinerant preachers who operated on a circuit that would have otherwise been unserved by the other "classes" of evangelicals. This religious system, coupled with the burgeoning secular structure of "politeness," helped codify both the term and the practice in Britain and especially North America by mid-century.[80] Add to this the Protestant work ethic associated with the bourgeoisie (i.e., their employees), that gave theater supporters a moral justification for the Thespian arts – a valuable type of capital in something of a culture war in eighteenth-century North America. The pulpit of the Puritan "saints" of the seventeenth century and the so-called "Great Awakening" of the eighteenth typically opposed the production of plays, and that is usually their role in theater histories of the period. But not much mention is made of their role as "show biz" competitors or as sources for rhetorical and dramatic methodologies.

Methodist "enthusiasm" at the pulpit did not go unnoticed by the followers of Thespis. While some members of the established Church of England reacted in horror at the "indecent" behavior of Methodist fire-and-brimstone "enthusiasts," there was no denying the impact it had on the audience.[81] Vicar Theophilus Evans provided an example of this "shocking" behavior observed at a typical Methodist meeting. This "Performance" featured

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80 Corfield, "Class by Name," 48. Charles G. Herbermann, et.al., eds, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: The Encyclopedia Company, 1913); the article on Methodism can be found at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10237b.htm.

81 For an example of this reaction, see Theophilus Evans, *The History of Modern Enthusiasm* (London, 1752).

> An artful management of the Holder-forth to scare his Audience with some shocking Expression, as, *that Hell flashes in their faces; that Satan stands ready to snatch them away*: And then he would repeat three or four Times, with a peculiar Tone, the awful Word, *Damn'd! Damn'd! Damn'd!* This loud Repetition of the Word *Damn'd*, with such an Emphasis on the Pronunciation, would fright the Children and make them cry; this would affect the tender Mothers, and set them screaming also: And thus the whole Congregation by Sympathy would catch the Infection, and the Scream would become general, which they fancied, like the *French* Prophets, to be the Work of Conviction.[82]

Certainly such a dramatic performance could not be ignored by the theater, and it was not.

Playwright Oliver Goldsmith wrote extensively on performance practice, public eloquence, and the power of the passions within the parameters of politeness. Having traveled to the continent, Goldsmith observed that oratory in Britain was bland and lifeless compared to that of France. In England itself, Goldsmith wrote that the further he strayed from the "polite" capital of London, the more animated, interested, and awake congregations became. Indeed, it was the Methodists who could light a fire under their audiences and such power should not be ignored by the purveyors of politeness. "Enthusiasm," should be embraced, while maintaining a sense of control and reason:

> When I think of the Methodist preachers among us, how seldom they are endued with common sense, and yet how often and how justly they affect their hearers, I cannot avoid saying within myself, had these been bred gentlemen, and been endued with even the meanest share of understanding, what might they not effect![83]

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82 Ibid., 115.

83 Peter Cunningham, ed., *Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, vol. I, 481. See also, Paul Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77-78.

Methodism, in its more extreme aspects, was generally seen by "polite" social circles – which is to also say, supporters, benefactors, and beneficiaries of the liberal economic empire – to be superstitious.[84] This tendency toward "superstition" was associated with the "Celtic fringe," i.e., the Scottish Highlanders and the Irish – the first victims of British imperial advances. By adapting Methodist "enthusiasm" to the well-bred pursuits of "polite" culture in the burgeoning public sphere – in this case its theatrical segment – Goldsmith provides a common ground for the culture of "politeness," the "enthusiasm" of hellfire and brimstone rhetoric, the commercially-driven empire, and the theater. This conflation provided the defining traits of so-called "legitimate" theater, an appellation which continues to dog attempts to achieve clarity in theater history and theater's role as a rhetorical filter in the public sphere of an economic empire.

On the eve of the American Revolution, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* was one of the more popular plays in the English theater. While it did not get widespread play in the North America until after the Revolution (the Continental Congress banned plays in 1774), when it returned as a stock play, the fact that it debuted in 1773 makes it a useful vehicle for an analysis of "polite" discourse in the eighteenth century British Empire. Representing the ambiguous class relationships in the English countryside, the country setting of the play was one reason for its eventual popularity in British North America, a land of farmers.[85] The familiarity

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84 Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 283; Goring, *Rhetoric*, 80.

85 There was a political connection with the English "Country" Radicals which is discussed in the next chapter.

between the master and servant classes depicted in the play led individuals like Horace Walpole, son of the first Prime Minister and "Gothic" writer, to condemn the play as "the lowest of all farces." On the other hand, Samuel Johnson, not exactly a radical democrat, found that it "succeeded prodigiously," and his support of the play probably helped it get off the ground when it debuted in London.[86] Goldsmith wrote that the fame of this variety of representation was measured by its profits, although it should be noted that Goldsmith was not among those who thought that market forces produced the best writing. Indeed, Goldsmith felt that "writing for bread" turned a writer's ambition into avarice. When the aristocracy and the court gave patronage to writers, more writers were able to produce higher quality works, he felt. Thus the subsidized writer who would have "done great honour to humanity" becomes, at the mercy of market society, "a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press."[87] This underscores the point that the "enlightened self-interest" of liberal economics and the prevalence of a market society in the British Atlantic world had become prevalent, if not an assumption, for many by the 1770s. Goldsmith was not alone in his belief that the arts should be subsidized and independent of market

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86 Quoted in John Harold Wilson, ed., *Six Eighteenth Century Plays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 233. *She Stoops to Conquer* was first performed in the colonies in New York at John Street Theater on August 2, 1773 by the "American Company" of players, headed by David Douglass. See Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage from 1750-1816*, vol. 1 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 63. There are numerous surveys of colonial theater and American theater as a whole. See, for example, Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War (*New York: F.S. Crofts and Co., 1944); Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (New York, London: Benjamin Blom, 1965); Hugh F. Rankin, *The Theater in Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960; Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982); for theater in Jamaica see Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica, 1682-1838* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969).

87 *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, 4 volumes, Peter Cunningham, ed. (London: John Murray, 1854; orig. pub. London; R. & J. Dodsley, 1759), II, 48.

economics. Indeed, as will be seen below, this notion was maintained into the nineteenth century in the new republic of the United States.[88]

In the play itself, the boundary between the bourgeois gentry and the servant class is noticeably reduced from Restoration plays like *The Fair Penitent*. The play is centered on the comical interactions between Miss Hardcastle and Marlow, betrothed to each other by their parents and who have never met. Marlow's shyness around bourgeois women of "quality," like Miss Hardcastle, is so acute that he cannot form a complete sentence in their presence. Yet, when it comes to the servants or the "duchesses of Drury Lane,"[89] he is an aggressive womanizer. Discerning this, Miss Hardcastle represents herself to him as both a maid and the Squire Hardcastle's daughter, his intended. With the latter he is embarrassingly clumsy, the former he pursues her almost recklessly.[90] Goldsmith puts Mr. Hardcastle's servants on a very familiar footing with their employer – so familiar that they are more like unruly children than employees. This arrangement reflects the influence of the rise of a commercially-driven class arrangement and is an illustration of a more egalitarian consciousness among the middling gentry depicted in the play – a middling gentry class to which most English colonists in North America who were not already a part of it desperately aspired. Acquisitiveness and non-titled wealth is abundantly

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88 See the discussion of William Dunlap in Chapter Four.

89 Prostitutes.

90 The association of female sexual allure with male power plays to the overarching empire theme and is treated by others, most notably Kathleen Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent: Imperialism and the Politics of Identity in Georgian England," in Bermingham and Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture*, 237-262, 248-254. This is also the central theme of her forthcoming *The Colonial Stage: Theatre, Culture, and Modernity in the English Provinces, 1720-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

represented; Miss Hardcastle's penchant for "gauze and French frippery" is matched by her best friend Miss Neville's love of the expensive jewelry left to her by her uncle, the "India director" of the British East India Company. The BEIC, as one of the first truly global companies to arise in Britain, is represented as the acme of attainment for the middle class and embodies the libertarian economics of the British Empire.[91] Both landed and fluid wealth are represented in this play, and a marriage in this (untitled) family is a thing of some social and economic consequence.[92]

In his introduction to the published version of this play, Goldsmith observed that, in tragedy, audiences tended to sympathize more greatly with some "great man fallen from his height" than with one "born in humbler circumstances." Regarding comedy, he noted that the "sentimental" comedy, a "new species of dramatic composition," exalted virtues over vices and "flatters every man in his favorite foible." The characters are always good, kind, and generous, and the audience is taught to embrace their foibles and applaud their folly.[93] The dialogue was structured according to the expectations of "polite" society, used extensively in all varieties of literature during the eighteenth century. Theater played a vital part in defining, depicting, and reinforcing what amounted to criteria for social mobility. Moreover,

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91 For a cogent discussion of the historiography of the "first" British Empire, see Philip Lawson, *A Taste for Power and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660-1800* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1997). The overarching thesis of Lawson's essays is that the North American colonies have attracted the lion's share of study because of events since the eighteenth-century and that this imbalance is not a reflection of the historical record. For the BEIC, see Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993); Nick Robins, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); for a more general view, see Robert B. Ekelund, Jr. and Robert D. Tollison, *Politicized Economies: Monarchy, Monopoly, and Mercantilism* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997).

92 Wilson, ed., *Six Eighteenth-Century Plays*, 243, 257.

93 Ibid., 236.

the playhouse itself was a public arena for people to demonstrate their aspirations to rise socio-economically by adopting and adhering to the "code" of politeness.[94]

But if one juxtaposes these notions of class and politeness against the messages contained in the performances of other cultures, an interesting contrast emerges. Slave performances, for example, drawing upon African cultures as well as New World influences, retained much of the authochthonic character of indigenous performance. Songs sung and dances performed by slaves in Jamaica, for example, were often oriented toward a relationship with crops and seasons. "Politeness," the criteria for social mobility in the Anglo world, was not part of the performance.[95]

A Hobbesian world of libertarian economics, featuring a rising, untitled economic class of entrepreneurs who were enabled by their manipulation of Parliament to use public resources, particularly the British navy and army, to secure private profits, generated a more fluid social structure.[96] This social structure developed its own hierarchy with its own rules for advancement. Theater, having helped to normalize both the concepts of empire and market economics, now helped normalize the new societal rules for social advancement. "Politeness," from the social realm; "sentiment," as an aesthetic; "enthusiasm," borrowed from religion; all were employed by theater managers and players for the express purpose of surviving in this Hobbesian environment. "Play or starve," a euphemism used by strolling players in the Ohio Valley in the mid-nineteenth century, was appropriate enough in

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94 Johnson, *Absence and Memory*, 57-61.

95 See, for example, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: New Beacon Books, 1971).

96 The most salient of the many works on this broad topic is John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

the eighteenth-century British Empire.[97] The primary difference in the latter was that society and empire itself had not democratized to the degree seen in the early American republic. But the same processes, established in London and the provinces, were well underway in the North American colonies by the 1770s.[98] Polite theater, which bears some similarity in societal influence to television today, was achieved not by a conservative faction of republican "whigs," or by Tory or Jacobite monarchists, but by those espousing the glories of libertarian, economic, imperial expansion which included members of each of the above groups. Control of resources at home and abroad and the all-important favorable balance of trade under the rubric of mercantilism was the political-economic context for this development of a culture of empire.

Resistance to imperial control over resources and markets, a main theme in the next chapter, was not coming from groups considered radically anti-imperial. Rather, they often represented conservative checks to this economic libertarianism that, we must recognize, brought far more misery and destruction to the colonized and subjugated peoples whose resources and labor were commodified and usurped than it did benefits. Theater, in addition to establishing rules for social mobility, bifurcated "polite" consciousness from this subjugation and usurpation of economic empire. There was a conservative consciousness alive in the British Empire that resisted absolute economic libertarianism, i.e., *laissez-faire* capitalism and economic empire.

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97 John Hanners, *"It Was Play or Starve": Acting in the Nineteenth-Century American Popular Theatre* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993).

98 Kathleen Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent," passim; *The Sense of the People*; and the forthcoming *The Colonial Stage: Theatre, Culture, and Modernity in the English Provinces, 1720-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

This was found in both the religious and civic republican traditions in North America in the 1770s, as well as the localized, pre-modern culture that came over in the minds of many immigrants. They were repairing to the "frontier" in search of a life relatively free of landlords and taxes. But the prospect of individual acquisition of wealth was a powerful force. The next chapter is a study of the theater in this complicated web of libertarian economic empire, traditional communalism, republicanism, and religion in colonial society during an age of conquest and upheaval.

Chapter Two
Empire and Republicanism on the North American Stage

During Christmas of 1756, the College of Philadelphia presented *Alfred*, a masque by James Thomson and set to music by Thomas Arne. In an ideological thread parallel to the lineage of classical republicanism, King Alfred's pre-Norman, Anglo-Saxon England was the highlighted reign from an epoch that was seen as the origin of the Common Law, or Ancient Constitution.[1] The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which printed the play over the course of four issues, noted that it expressed "a Love of Liberty and a concern for the Commerce and Glory of Great Britain." The play was presented again at the College for the 4th Earl of Loudoun, (John Campbell), upon his arrival in January, 1757 to meet with colonial governors regarding Indian relations, i.e., those who were suffering the lasting negative effects of Britain's "Commerce and Glory."[2] The masque itself was a dramatic depiction of the historical figure of King Alfred, a ninth-century Saxon king who had been conquered by the Danes and driven into hiding. After his confidence and resolve are restored by a

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1 Discourse over the so-called Ancient Constitution and its departure from "natural law," or "natural law's" departure from the Ancient Constitution in the colonies is a subject of historical debate. For the significance of law in the separation of the North American colonies from England, see J.C.D. Clark, *Language of Liberty: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46-140. One of the central threads of Clark's argument is that the conflation of different aspects of the Common Law as England became "Britain" on the island itself divided into a notion of "natural law" separate from "Common Law". This view was fundamentally at odds with the established sovereignty of King-in-Parliament, thus setting up one avenue of conflict. This is explored further below. See also Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., "Colonial Courts and the Common Law," in David H. Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Early American Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Jack P. Greene, "From the Perspective of Law: Context and legitimacy in the origins of the American Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 85 (1986), 56-77; J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), passim.

2 *Alfred*, in Richard Moody, ed., *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1966), 1.

blind bard, he retakes the island from the Viking invaders. Thomson has Alfred sing what could be seen as a Whig anthem:

> When Britain first, at Heaven's command,
> Arose from out the azure main,
> This was the charter of the land,
> And guardian angels sung this strain
> "Rule Britannia, rule the waves;
> Britons will never be slaves."[3]

The Danes were an ancient enemy of the English dating back to the mythic past. *Alfred* helped to both codify and perpetuate this past in the changing present of the early modern period. Ruling the waves meant imperial economic expansion and *Alfred* reflected a template for conquest called forth from history. Imperial culture as depicted on a theater stage could fit any potential enemy into the role of the Danes in *Alfred*. The combination of "Liberty," "Commerce" and "Glory" in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* commentary is also significant. The *liberty* to pursue acquisitive commercial endeavors would lead to *glory*, both for the individual and for Britain, and that this glory was a desirable thing to have. It was the kind of construction that both implanted and revealed the assumptions of the public mind, at least the officially sanctioned version of it. The unofficial version, i.e., the "real" version, was much more complicated if for no other reason than "Commerce and Glory" in North America in the eighteenth century meant invading the "Liberty" of numerous peoples who found themselves in the "Dane" slot of this imperial template. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a relationship between various types of "whiggism" and colonial theater performances, including street theater, that rationalized, justified and,

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3 Ibid., 40.

on occasion, helped create a non-European identity for Euro-Americans in this expansive economic empire.

While the above template provides convenient shorthand for popular mythology surrounding British expansion in North America, the classical republicanism often associated with Whig views is much more complicated. In the previous chapter, I discussed the origins of the expansive, libertarian economic practices that eventually came to be called liberalism. But the term "Whig" also included the brands of republican ideology that spread to the colonies especially after the English Civil War and the "Glorious" Revolution. These continued to evolve and influence events throughout the eighteenth century, gathering a life of its own away from England.[4] Succeeding generations adapted these writings to their situations. In England, there was the so-called "Opposition" to the imperialist policies of Robert Walpole that was the Mother Country's version of dissent against the perceived arbitrary power of King-in-Parliament.[5] In the colonies, John Peter Zenger's 1734 publication of at least two broadside ballads celebrating a popular election victory of middling colonials over candidates loyal to New York's Governor William Crosby is

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4 Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), and Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1969), along with Pocock, argue for the profound influence of republican literature in the colonies. J.C.D. Clark notes that John Trenchard's and Thomas Gordon's *Cato's Letters* (London: J. Roberts, 1720), seem to be the only republican tracts that were reprinted in the colonies, see *Language of Liberty*, 26. Of course, the fact that many republican tracts were not published in the colonies does not mean they were not read. As is noted below, street theater activists generally knew their history of republicanism. For the various schools of thought under the rubric of "Whiggism," see J.G.A. Pocock, "Varieties of Whiggism," in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 215-310.

5 Perhaps the most referenced of this literature is Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato's Letters*.

a case in point. Utilizing Whig Opposition rhetoric that would have been recognizable in the Mother Country, Zenger praised those who voted for candidates running against Crosby's heavy-handed tactics:

> Your votes you gave for those brave men / who feasting did despise;
> And never prostituted pen / to certify the lies
> That were drawn up to put in chains
> As well our nymphs as happy swains . . .

Zenger and his defenders saw themselves as adapting the ideas of the "patriot Whigs" of seventeenth century to their own situation.[6] The critique of Crosby's arbitrary rule in these songs – a critique that could net an informer a twenty-pound reward for identifying the culprit who wrote it – points to the admiration Zenger and his colleagues had for responsible governance and the disdain they had for corrupt placemen.[7]

But this was a New York where approximately twenty-five percent of the population was in chains and the acquisition of Indian lands was ever at the root of the colonists' economic expansion. Historical literature over-remembers the spectrum of conflict that pits Crosby at one end and Zenger at the other, and under-remembers that this is only a small part of a larger spectrum of events. This minimizes the presence on the historical radar of both the enslaved wealth-producing

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6 James Alexander, *A Brief Narrative of the Case and Trial of John Peter Zenger, Printer of the New York Weekly Journal* (1735), ed. Stanley Nider Katz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), quoted in David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 23. James Alexander was the owner of the *Weekly Journal* that spoke out against Crosby. A jury defied the order of the judge in the case to ignore whether or not Zenger's comments were true and acquitted him of seditious libel.

7 William Crosby, *Proclamation* (New York: 1734), posted online at http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer_pol_hist/fi/0000000c.htm.

class and the native targets of land expropriation. This historical myopia created, instilled, and maintained in the dominant culture a sense of superiority and self-righteousness that allowed it to continue to overlook the contradictions inherent in the demand for increased democracy alongside the ownership of slaves and expropriation lands. The theater was a major factor in this process.

Theater troupes in British North America were not consistently successful until the 1750s. The study of players and playhouses has taken up much of the ink devoted to theater history.[8] Odai Johnson's and William Burling's *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar*, has updated and standardized the discourse to some extent, as well as providing the most comprehensive calendar of colonial theater performances in British North American and the Caribbean. According to their research, the first dependable theater troupe in the colonies was known as the London Company, later the American Company, and after the Revolution the Old American Company. It was led first by Lewis Hallam, then David Douglass, and after the war by Lewis Hallam, Jr. and John Henry. Arriving in 1752 with a repertoire of twenty-four plays, they are treated in much of the historical literature in hagiographic fashion. They were particularly successful in the South and the Caribbean, with limited success in Philadelphia and New York. Boston was more

8 A sampling of this literature includes William Dunlap, *History of the American Theatre*, 2 Vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963, orig. pub. New York: J. and J. Harper, 1832); Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York: F.S. Crofts and Co., 1944); Richard Moody, *America Takes the Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955); Hugh F. Rankin, *The Theater in Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1919; reprinted New York, London: Benjamin Blom, 1965); J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977); Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

or less off limits to them, although plays, readings, and "lectures" were held there.[9]

While the "legitimate" or "polite" theater was establishing itself in the southern colonies, the cultural environment north of the Mason-Dixon line was less receptive. There, college plays could often serve as vehicles for the Thespian arts with the rationale that they were a heuristic device for imparting rhetoric and public speaking to the next generation. As the first Provost of the College of Philadelphia, William Smith wrote, "Ever since the foundation of the College and Academy in this city, the improvement of the youth in oratory and correct speaking, has always been considered an essential branch of their education," and theater was a good vehicle to that end.[10]

Graduating students at the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1762 performed a "recited dialogue" written by Francis Hopkinson, a future signer of the Declaration of Independence. This was near the end of the imperial struggle between Britain and France for exclusive European presence in Canada and the trans-Appalachian West. The *Dialogue* is a paean to the recently-crowned monarch, George III, the "Thrice happy Monarch! Skill'd in every Art," that calls out the *Ode*:

> Bright ascending in the Skies / See Britannia's Glory rise!
> Cease your sorrows, cease your Fears! / Night recedes and Day appears!
> Another George majestic fills the Throne, / And glad Britannia calls him all her own.

Under this benevolent and blissful rule:

> Rough War shall humbly at his Feet / Her bloody Laurels lay;

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9 For the subtle nature of theater in Boston, see Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory: Fioreli's Plaster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 93-144.

10 Quoted in Richard Moody, ed., *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909* (Cleveland and New York: The World publishing Company, 1966), 1.

> Him gentle Peace shall kindly greet / And smile beneath his Sway.
> The Britain! Hail these golden Days! / Illustrious shalt thou shine:
> For George shall gain immortal Praise; / And, Britain! George is thine.
> To distant Times he shall extend thy Name, And give thy Glories to a deathless Fame.[11]

These students were reciting a theme in the colonial culture of empire, the "rising glory" of Britain under George III, a monarch who supported a heavy-handed combination of government and the pursuit of resources and markets.

An inverted form of this "rising glory" theme echoed in the colonies some ten years later as tensions between the Mother Empire and her rebellious offspring were on the rise. The *Massachusetts Spy* printed a republican Whig version bemoaning the tyrannical turn of George III:

> Let us, your sons, by freedom warm'd,
> Your own example keep in view
> "Gainst TYRANNY be ever arm'd,
> Tho' we our TYRANT find – is you.
> Rule Britannia, rule the waves
> But never make your children slaves.[12]

A divine hand had created Britain to rule by example, but her "children" saw her rule becoming tyrannical, and again there is the ironic use of the word "slaves." From the point of view of Britain's North American colonies, where much of the wealth was produced by slaves, the sensible and virtuous offspring in a divinely-graced family were attempting a check on the parent's tyrannical rule.[13]

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11 Francis Hopkinson, *An Exercise Containing a Dialogue and Ode, On the Accession of His present gracious Majesty George III*, quoted in Moody, ed., *Dramas from the American Theatre,* 6.

12*Massachusetts Spy*, 10 November, 1774, quoted in Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1976), 39.

13 This lends support to Professor Clark's thesis that religion was a larger factor in the Revolution than ideology. See *Language of Liberty*, 141-217.

The "Liberty – Commerce – Glory" trifecta, then, minimizes the harsh realities embedded in the missing word: Empire. The American Revolution has been seen as a blow against tyranny. That it was also, in part, the struggle of a group of splinter empires against its parent, a global empire, is rarely discussed.[14] In order for these splinters to oppose the most rich and powerful empire in the Atlantic basin, if not the world, an articulation of fundamental values for citizens' relations with government was needed. Hence the widespread publications and performances of variations on the theme literary historian Andy Doolen has called, "republican in principle, imperial in practice."[15]

Republicanism and imperialism shared common ground in Classicism. The "glory" of Greece and Rome, conveyed westward by the perceived enlightening force of Empire – formerly Roman, now British but developing a new scion in North America – fed the cultural and political rise of Euro-Americanism. "'[T]is said, the Arts delight to travel Westward," Benjamin Franklin wrote to Mary Stevenson in London.[16] Known as *Translatio Studii* (or just "Translation"), the rediscovered texts

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14 For exceptions to this see Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992); Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 296-302; Wood, *Creation*, 177-78, 349-350.

15 Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv. For a discussion of the inflated role the North American colonies are given in the larger picture of the global British Empire, see Philip Lawson, "The Missing Link: The Imperial Dimension in Understanding Hanoverian Britain," *The Historical Journal*, XXIX, 747-775, in Lawson, ed., *A Taste for Empire and Glory*. See also James E. Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown, and Public Opinion* (Macon: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Dora Mae Clark, *British Opinion and the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930. For views of the empire within England, see Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); and *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in Britain, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Price, "Who Cared about the Colonies".

16 Silverman, 9 (quote), 242.

of the classical world seeded European and Euro-American minds with concepts of literature, theater, music, and the scientific inquiry of the "collegium." Political ideology born of Aristotle, Plato, and Polybius had migrated from the Italian city-states to England via the writings of James Harrington in the seventeenth-century. Harrington's *Oceana* spawned political debate that resulted in the English "Country" Radical school of political thought that was heavily influenced by Greece and Rome.[17] This scion of classical republicanism, in addition to the rational liberalism of Hobbes and Locke as well as the Ancient Constitution, gave British North American colonies a language of self-determination by the mid-eighteenth century.[18] Indeed, whenever a library, hospital, college, or other public facility was dedicated, officials would often cite the "advent'rous Muse," the "light of Athens," or some other classical reference in their speeches and public writings. The most famous of these was "Westward the course of empire takes its way," from Reverend George Berkeley's poem celebrating an effort to found a college in Bermuda.[19] On a Maryland theater stage in 1760 during the French-Indian War, the speaker made it clear that the classical muse of comedy, Thalia, was clearly on the side of the British:

> O'er takes his Sun, communicates his Fires,
> And rising Bards in Western Climes inspires!
> See Genius wakes dispels the former Gloom,
> And shed's Light's Blaze, deriv'd from Greece and Rome![20]

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17 J.G.A. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment,* especially Part 3, 333-552; Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century English Commonwealthmen*, passim.

18For the Atlantic crossing of classical republicanism, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), and Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment.*

19The poem was "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," written in 1726 and published in 1752. Reproduced in Silverman, xix.

20Silverman, 10. The speaker got the gender of the muse wrong, however. Thalia, or Thaleia, was the muse of comedy and "playful, idyllic poetry." There is a 1739 painting of Thalia in

Virginian George Mason wrote in a letter "To the Committee of Merchants in London" that paraphrased the "Epistles" of Horace: "In crossing the Atlantic Ocean, we have only changed our climate, not our minds: our natures and dispositions remain unaltered."[21] Anglo-North America was an outpost of a European discourse – a nascent regional empire within a far-flung global empire that was embracing the assumptions and ideologies of imperial projects dating back over two thousand years. Moreover, the imperial policies set forth by Britain's first Prime Minister Robert Walpole opened the door to new ideas about societal structures, economics, and culture that operated under this Classical imprimatur. Reifying old ideas to meet new circumstance only increased with European expansion and the rise of what would eventually be called liberalism.[22] But this new societal structure was not without its critics – it reflected the old hierarchy, only with much more fluidity which allowed a *nouveau riche* class newfound access to power.

John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) satirized the economic nature of the emerging class system and the pretensions associated with the so-called "polite"

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the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Museum done by the French artist Jean-Marc Nattier entitled, appropriately enough, Thalia, Muse of Comedy. See http://search.famsf.org:8080/view.shtml?record=64295&=list&=1&=thali.

It should be noted that it is significant for the future of the continent that the native inhabitants of North America were misunderstood and never seen for who they really were: a people with a lot to teach the newcomers, hence their cultural decimation. Greece and Rome, and the intermediary of London, were considered the only valid cultural precedents for British Euro-America. A bastardized form of indigenous American, discussed below, made its way into Anglo-American consciousness as the colonies attained political separation from Britain. See Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

21Richard M. Gummere, *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 2.

22 J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) studies some of this reification; as does J.G.A. Pocock in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), and *The Machiavellian Moment*.

classes, *nouveau* or *ancien*. More than most other plays of the era, this one reveals a deeper awareness of the capitalist system's social ambiguity. In addition to burlesquing the Italian opera that was sweeping Europe in the eighteenth century, Gay made satirical allusions to the economic culture created in part by Robert Walpole in the early Hanoverian period, whose manipulations of Parliament on behalf of economic interests were legendary. *The Beggar's Opera* portrayed a seemingly typical bourgeois barrister/accountant and his wife as worse than common highwaymen who, for their part, at least carried a sense of honor and loyalty into their "business" – a comparatively honest form of robbery. The wealth of the latter, after all, was gained through a form of physical labor and danger.

The story revolves around the daughter of the couple, Polly Peachum, and her relationship/marriage to one of the leaders of the highwaymen, Captain Macheath. His "gang" consists of men with names like Crook-finger'd Jack, Wat Dreary, Nimming Ned, Mat of the Mint, and Jemmy Twitcher. A musical that utilized the melodies of nearly thirty popular songs of the day set to different words, *The Beggar's Opera* was one of the most popular plays in the colonies. The first of these "Airs" opens the first scene, sung by Peachum:

> Through all the Employments of Life
> Each Neighbour abuses his Brother;
> Where and Rogue they call Husband and Wife:
> All Professions be-rogue one another.
> The Priest calls the Lawyer a Cheat,
> The Lawyer be-knaves the Divine;
> And the Statesman, because he's so great,
> Thinks his Trade as honest as mine.[23]

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23 John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, *as it is acted at Drury Lane in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* (London: John Watts, 1728), 1.

This describes the world as seen by Thomas Hobbes nearly a century earlier, and sets a libertarian tone for the rest of the play. Money, according to Peachum, is the solution to every problem. Responding to his wife's concern about the "Blemish" of their daughter's marriage to Macheath, Peachum says:

> But Money, Wife, is the true Fuller's Earth for Reputations, there is not a Spot or a Stain but what it can take out. A rich Rogue now-a-days is fit Company for any Gentleman; and the World, my Dear, hath not such a Contempt for Roguery as you imagine.[24]

Presently, Peachum sings a song to underscore both this point and the nature of his and his wife's "business":

> A Fox may steal your Hens, Sir,
> A Whore your Health and Pence, Sir,
> Your Daughter rob your Chest, Sir,
> Your Wife may steal your Rest, Sir,
> A Thief your Goods and Plate.
>
> But this is all but picking;
> With Rest, Pence, Chest and Chicken,
> It ever was decreed, Sir,
> If Lawyer's Hand is fee'd, Sir,
> He steals your whole Estate.

To which he adds, "The Lawyers are bitter Enemies to those in our Way. They don't care that any Body should get a Clandestine Livelihood but themselves."

Polly, whose love for Macheath is never taken seriously by anyone in the play other than herself, to a lesser extent the Captain and her chief rival Lucy (of whom she is so far unaware), is asked by her parents to kill her new husband. By so doing, Peachum and wife hope to retain his estate and eliminate the possibility of his blackmailing them. After hearing Polly defend her gratitude for the Captain's love,

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24 Ibid., 12. "Fuller's Earth" is a clay used to purify oils.

Mrs. Peachum declares, "But your Duty to your Parents, Hussy, obliges you to hang him. What would many a Wife give for such an Opportunity!" Peachum announces, "Then, indeed, we must Comply with the Customs of the World, and make Gratitude give way to Interest – He shall be taken off [killed]."[25]

The leveling sentiment is further captured in a scene at a tavern near Newgate prison, where Captain Macheath's "gang" is gathered with "wine, brandy, and tobacco":

> **Jemmy Twitcher**: But the present Time is ours, and no Body alive hath more. Why are the Laws levell'd at us? Are we more dishonest than the rest of Mankind? What we win, Gentlemen, is our own by the Law of Arms, and the Right of Conquest.
> **Crook-Finger'd Jack**: Where shall we find such another Set of Practical Philosophers, who to a Man are above the Fear of Death?
> **Wat**: Sound Men, and true.
> **Robin of Bagshot**: Of try'd Courage, and indefatigable industry!
> **Nimming Ned**: Who is there here who would not die for his Friend?
> **Harry Padington**: Who is there here that would not betray him for his Interest?
> **Mat of the Mint**: Show me a Gang of Courtiers that can say as much.
> **Ben Budge**: WE are for a just Partition of the World, for every Man hath a Right to enjoy Life.
> **Mat**: We retrench the Superfluities of Mankind. The World is avaricious, and I hate Avarice. The covetous fellow, like a Jack-daw steals what he was never made to enjoy, for the sake of hiding it. These are the Robbers of Mankind, for Money was made for the Free-hearted and Generous, and where is the injury of taking from another, what he hath not the Heart to make use of?
> **Jem**: Our several Stations for the Day are fixt. Good luck attend us all. Fill the Glasses.[26]

25 Ibid., 15.

26 Ibid., 19.

And again when Macheath is re-united with all his female friends at the tavern, "Jenny Diver" sings the following to the tune of a popular air, "When Once I Lay with Another Man's Wife":

> The Gamesters and Lawyers are Jugglers alike,
> If they meddle your All is in danger.
> Like Gypsies, if once they can finger a Souse,
> Your Pockets they pick, and they pilfer your House,
> And give your Estate to a Stranger.[27]

The Beggar's Opera satirizes the libertarian economics of the eighteenth century that creates a class of *nouveau riche* and sets possessive materialism and acquisition at the center of society. On the other hand, it validates it with lines like "Money was made for the Free-hearted and Generous" and "Men hath the Right to enjoy Life." During this transitional period from well-defined social stratification to an increasingly grasping possessive individualism and fluid structure, some satire was needed to process this social upheaval, both at home and in the colonies. It was so popular even Samuel Johnson pointed out that, "The ladies carried about with them the favorite song of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens. The person who acted Polly, till then obscure, became "all at once the favorite of the town," and at the end of that opening season became the mistress and eventual wife of the Duke of Bolton.[28] The *Beggar's Opera* had presented an irreverent view of the class system produced by market society and its notions of "politeness." Yet, class was still very much a part of the social construction of the empire in colonial North

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27 Ibid., 25.

28 "Introduction" to John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, in Wilson, *Six Plays,* 125-126. Regarding Walpole, he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but his influence in both Court and Parliament has earned him the unofficial title of Britain's "first prime minister."

America.[29] Those who, like the "Commerce and Glory of Britain," were rising socio-economically, felt that they represented a natural nobility that had every right to make important decisions regarding their investments without input from those who they considered their inferiors.[30]

Gustavus Vasa, a play about a Swedish leader in self-imposed exile as a slave in a copper mine who rises up through his natural skills to lead a revolution against the Danish tyrant Christiern, represents this natural nobility. In the play, Vasa's "wond'rous greatness" is recognized almost immediately by Anderson and Arnoldus, lord and priest of Dalecarlia, where the play is set.[31] Much of the play is a series of revelations regarding Vasa's uncommon virtue, and the revelation of his natural heroism as he sacrifices his wife, sister, and lover for the cause of his country's freedom. The average citizens of Sweden are depicted as have fallen into corruption and sloth and subjugation, eventually to be roused by the virtue of Vasa into action. The ease of historicizing Vasa as whatever heroic general was in the public consciousness during the various wars of empire in the eighteenth century is apparent.

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29 See the discussion in Chapter 3 of social mobility manifesting itself as a willingness to adopt and adhere to the notion of "politeness".

30 For a discussion of "natural nobility," see Wood, *Creation*, 71, 237, 245, 479-480, 490, 508-510; and Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 278-280. An example of this is found in a novel by Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry, Containing the Adventures of a Captain and Teague O'Regan, His Servant* (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1807), in which Brackenridge points out the hazards of the unqualified in positions of power. See also Wood, 480, as well as a study of deference in colonial Connecticut by Joy B. and Robert R. Gilsdorf, "Elites and Electorates: Some Plain Truths for Historians of Colonial America," in David D. Hall, et.al., eds., *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1984), 207-244.

31 *The British drama: A Collection of the Most Esteemed Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, and Farces, in the English Language* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1859), 378-379. See also, Ginger Strand, "The Theater and the Republic: Defining Party on Early Boston's Rival Stages," in Jeffrey Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 19-36.

Walpole and George II were sensitive to the depictions of corruption, however. The play had been banned by the Licensing Act of 1737 in England for its depiction of a corrupt society – a charge imparted to the policies of Walpole and the King by "radical whig" and Tory alike.[32] By the 1760s the historicizing of the Swedes' corruption was equated with Grenville, Bute, and George III, as well as the Stamp Act protestors and their leaders. In short, as tensions grew between the colonies and the Mother Country, many of these plays worked on both sides.

Douglas, a tragedy that conflated through historicism the virtues of Rome with those of a Scottish chief, tells a similar tale. The main character, namesake and son of the "hero of the Caledonian shore," has his identity masked by an accident of early childhood where he was swept away by a raging flood and presumed lost. Reared by a humble but virtuous peasant, the anonymous son of the king returns to the city just in time to help defend it against an attack by the Danes. Like Gustavus Vasa, Douglas's "natural nobility" is revealed and, in a conversation with his mother they both realize each other's identity.[33]

Republican Whig sentiment grew with the dissatisfaction in both England and the colonies against first the corruption of the Walpolean era and later the heavy-handedness of George III and his ministers. This was true whether the point of reference for the dissent was republicanism, "natural law," the Ancient Constitution, or Enlightenment rationalism. George Lillo had his characters discuss "unalienable

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32 Strand, 26-28.

33 Michael Booth, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Tragedy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 227-300.

right" and "sons of liberty" in his play *The Christian Hero*.[34] This republican sentiment was strongly represented on the stage by the production of Joseph Addison's 1713 play *Cato, A Tragedy*, the first English play to be published in North America (1767), and George Washington's favorite.[35] *Cato* represented the embodiment of Virtue and was George Washington's self-proclaimed role model well before war between the colonies and the Mother Country. The historic Cato the Younger (95-46 B.C.) was a Stoic and member of the Roman Senate who stood against the takeover of Rome by Julius Caesar, who desired to install himself as emperor. The play represents the last hours of Cato and his followers' resistance against the Roman Legions at Utica in North Africa. The conflict is clearly republican government vs. tyrannical monarchy; it ranks death as a more desirable choice than virtue compromised:

> So shall we gain still one day's liberty;
> And let me perish, but in Cato's judgment,
> A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty,
> Is worth a whole eternity in bondage.
> . . .
> My life is grafted on the fate of Rome:
> Would he save Cato, bid him spare his country.
> Tell your dictator this: and tell him, Cato
> Disdains a life which he has power to offer.[36]

In Addison's play, Cato declines an invitation from Caesar to participate in the latter's dictatorship. Because he does not wish to live subservient to a tyrant, nor

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34 Silverman, 82

35 For an extended discussion of Addison's *Cato*, particularly as historicized through Nathan Hale, see Jason Shaffer, "'Great Cato's Descendants': A Geneology of Colonial Performance," *Theatre Survey* 44:1 (May, 1993), 5-28.

36 Joseph Addison, *Cato, A Tragedy*, Act II, Scene 1, 97-100; Act II, Scene 2, 8-11.

wish his family and followers to sacrifice their lives to the cause he champions, he throws himself on his sword, preserving his honor and allowing his entourage to surrender if they wish. Like *Alfred*, *Cato* was well-suited to student performances because, as Dr. Johnson pointed out, it was "rather a poem in dialogue than a drama."[37] This play, as well as *Douglas* and *Gustavus Vasa*, represented a departure from the depiction of the class criteria of "politeness" and economic empire. It should be noted again that these plays were popular not only on both sides of the Atlantic in the colonial period, but with both Whigs and Tories.

The glories of the North American empire began to compete with the glories of the Mother Country as the eighteenth century progressed. Graduating students at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) heard the recitation entitled "A Poem on the Rising Glory of America" at their commencement on September 25, 1771.[38] Written by graduating students Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau, who both went on to some renown in the early republic, the poem was received with "great applause" according to their classmate James Madison. It also went on to be published the next year and widely read in the colonies and is still presented as an example of an early American "native" cultural expression. Here again, the standard

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37 Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 44; Silverman, 83; Johnson quote in Edmund S. Morgand and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995; orig. pub. 1953), 518. There is further discussion of *Cato* in the chapter on the Revolution.

38 Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau, "A Poem on the Rising Glory of America: Being an Exercise Delivered at the Public Commencement at Nassau-Hall, September 25, 1771 (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1772). This analysis is based on the full version of the poem found in the Readex Microprint series, *Three Centuries of Drama: American, 1714-1830*. An overly redacted version that loses much of its impact can be found in Eve Kornfield, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2001), 83-88.

historical discourse is an Anglo-centric one that ignores the indigenous perspective that would reveal the imperial nature of Anglo-American society. The poem is worth some analysis, because it captures the conflation of the various whiggish historical concepts under discussion here, and underscores the point that republicanism and empire were indeed intertwined in the popular culture of the revolutionary era.

In September of 1771, the colonies were in the so-called "Quiet Period." The Stamp Act and its repeal, the Declaratory Act, the Townshend Acts and their repeal, the militant activities of the Sons of Liberty, and the Boston "Massacre" were recent events. British troops occupied the colonies and had since the French-Indian War commenced nearly two decades previous. In the poem, three "swains," Junio, Acasto, and Leander, proclaim the glories of Anglo-America in no uncertain terms, and underscore the imperial heart of the colonial project. A few examples help to show that what is generally termed American republicanism was seen as compatible with economic empire and "glory." Leander proclaims:

> No more of Memphis . . . where the Ptolemies
> Taught Golden Commerce to unfurl her falls
> And bid fair science smile . . . No more of Athens,
> [Whose] sons of might genius [rose and]
> Revived the Spirit of Liberty . . .
> No more of Rome . . . imperial Rome!
> Whose eagle flew [from the Ganges to Britain].
> No more of Britain and her kings renowned . . .
> Illustrious senators, immortal bards,
> And wise philosophers.

Acasto then requests more of the "strain / So new, so noble and full of fame" that will tell the tale of "America's own sons, begin O muse!" – tell how "the hero [Columbus] made his way" only to give way to the popish barbarities of Cortez and

"Indian blood to dye the sands, and choak / Fam'd Amazonia's stream with dead!" Unlike Britannia's sons, who, "Undeluged with seas of Indian blood," gain through their "gen'rous breast" lands won "by fair treaty," and "conquer[ing] without blood." This not only taps the "Black Legend" of the Spanish Empire but provides a balm for those on the leading edge of the British Empire. In recent memory of course was the French-Indian War – a bloody affair that decimated many of the already-disrupted peoples of the Ohio country and featured biological warfare through the use of smallpox-infested blankets by General Jeffrey Amherst and others.[39]

In the poem, Eugenio then relates how Britannia's Cabot and Raleigh have blazed the trail into this land of "simple natives" who originated, Leander speculates, in Carthage (Tunisia). These "savage men" were likely descended from those who broke the "Roman yoke," sailed out of the Mediterranean, and were "Caught by the eastern trade wind." "How fallen, Oh!" Leander laments – these folk who "wander'd blindfolded down the steep of time / Dim superstition with her ghastly train / Of daemons, spectres, and forboding signs . . . No fix'd abode their wand'ring genius knew" – certainly not after being scattered by the guns of the British advancement.[40]

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39 General Jeffrey Amherst to Colonel Henry Bouquet, 16 July, 1763, *British Manuscript Project,* Library of Congress. See also *Journal of Captain William Trent from Logstown to Pickawillany, A.D. 1752* (New York: Arno Press, 1971; orig. pub., 1871). Trent's recording of his trading smallpox-infested handkerchiefs to Indians occurs in May, two months before Amherst's letter advocating the use of smallpox-infested blankets. Both documents can be viewed at http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/amherst/lord_jeff.html.

40 See Frederic W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Alfred Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); Jill Lapore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), et.al.

But now, Acasto reminds the audience, "Now fair-ey'd commerce stretches her white sails, / Learning exalts her head, the graces smile." Thus Britannia has set herself amid this alleged darkness, pursuing, "The glorious cause that urg'd our fathers first / To visit climes unknown." Eugenio observes that "by persecution wrong'd / and popish cruelty, our fathers came / From Europe's shores to find this blest abode / Secure from tyranny and hateful man." In this construction, Britain is Rome, Native Americans are Carthage, and the script of the Third Punic War was that Rome destroyed Carthage, making the British conquest of North America seem natural and inevitable.

Britannia's "fair-ey'd commerce" was unlike that of the corrupt popish Spain's pursuit of bullion, according to these youthful poets. In Britain's realm, "more noble riches flow / From agriculture and the industrious swain, / Who tills the fertile vale or mountain's brow, "Content to lead a safe, a humble life / 'Midst his own native hills," Acasto muses. "Long has the rural life been justly fam'd," Leander announces, and the British project in America comes from a tradition where, "Fair agriculture, not unworthy of kings, / Once exercis'd the royal hand." Here is expressed an aspect of the "Country" version of British whiggism where landed property and independence gave rise to "virtuous swains" who criticized patronage in Parliament, public credit, and the presence of standing armies.[41] This represents a strain of republicanism that Professor Pocock has traced back through the

41 Pocock, "Varieties of Whiggism," 217; Robbins, *Commonwealthmen*, passim.

Interregnum and Civil War to the Italian Renaissance and beyond.[42] Yet, in the poem it is juxtaposed next to the leading edge of the imperial project, perpetuated by visions of the "Whig oligarchy's" economic empire and based on a "system of public finance by a class of great landed proprietors," a notion in direct conflict with the pastoral ideal of classical republicanism.[43] This section of the poem reveals the ambiguity of Whiggism at the heart of the first British Empire and its evolution into an American strain.

The worship of the mythological fallen War Hero is present in the poem, with a decided lack of nuance regarding the purpose of the war or the circumstances of the fall. Fighting against "false Gallia's sons," the "British standard awe's the coward host." General James Wolfe, fallen British commander of the Battle of Quebec in 1759 is championed: "What Heart but mourns the untimely fate of Wolf *[sic]* / who dying conquer'd, or what breast but beats / To share a fate like his, and die like him?" And this benevolent Empire of Britannia's sons shall conquer the "dreary wastes and awful solitudes" of North America and "spread / Dominion to the north and south and west / Far from th' Atlantic to Pacific shores." Referencing the "excil'd seer in Patmos isle," i.e., the revelation of John and the end of the world, "A new Jerusalem sent down from heaven / Shall grace our happy earth" and "Paradise a new / Shall flourish, by no second Adam lost / No dang'rous tree or deathful fruit shall grow / No

42 Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, passim.

43 Pocock, "Varieties of Whiggism," 218.

tempting serpent to allure the soul." This was not the only millennial vision for North America among Euro-Americans.[44]

While this dramatic poem was not as widely performed as those of "polite" society, i.e., "legitimate" theater, it nevertheless represents another nexus of mythological archetypes in this poem to America's "rising glory." Certainly the next two-plus centuries have validated the dramatic expectations of these young college graduates. That these developments were necessarily all on the side of the angels is open to question, but economic empire was what the Anglo-American project, at base, had always been about and would continue to be about after the political break with England. This poem, published and often recited on the theatrical stages of commencement proceedings, dedications, etc., embodies many of the mythic images in the minds of various and sundry colonists on the leading edge of empire.

The George Cockings play that expounded on this theme in terms of military glory, *The Conquest of Canada*, apparently was performed only twice in the colonies after its premier in London in 1766. Both of these performances occurred in February, 1773, the year before theater was banned as conflict with the Mother Country intensified. The huge cast and machinery needed for such a production was likely a factor, but it is also true that tensions between the colonists and England were increased rather than decreased by the real "Conquest of Canada." The Proclamation Line of 1763 which forbid colonial expansion to the west, and the presence of what

44 See, for example, Herman Husbands, *XIV Sermons on the Characters of Jacob's Fourteen Sons* (Boston: William Spotswood, 1789).

was increasingly seen as an army of occupation, meant that performances of imperial culture in the colonies would take another direction.

Theater stages in the North American colonies, as illustrated in the previous chapter, represented for the most part the "polite" society of the bourgeoisie and its aspirants, although the theater itself might serve a multitude of social purposes. Those who did not share the values of acquisition, i.e., wealth and power, were those more inclined to embrace the values of religious or traditional cultures, European and American. Folk culture played an important role in the libertarian environment of the North America and provided ready-made tropes for opposing policies deemed unacceptable and an imposition by a distant government. As Jeffrey Richards and others have shown, theater could be much more than a staged play, and in the British colonies it spilled into the street.[45] The French philosophe Jean-Jacques Rousseau, also an advocate of popular sovereignty, called for more outdoor entertainments and festivities:

> [L]et us not adopt these exclusive entertainments which close up a small number of people in melancholy fashion in a gloomy cavern, which keep them fearful and immobile in silence and inaction, which give them only prisons, lances, solders, and afflicting images of servitude and inequality to see.[46]

Outdoor performance had long been a part of folk cultures, and pre-modern

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45 Jeffrey H. Richards, *Theatre Enough: American Culture and the Metaphor of the World Stage, 1607-1789* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991); See also John Weisman, *Guerilla Theatre: Scenarios for Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973); Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*. See also the essays in William Pencak, et.al., eds, *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002); and Margaret D. Jacob and James R. Jacob, eds., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

46 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), quoted in Richards, *Theatre Enough*, 207.

localism was part of the air the early British colonials breathed. Indeed, it was the heartbeat of pre-modern culture that nationalistic, abstract market economics disrupted. The lower classes who found their way to North America brought localism with them in forms unique to their source region, yet it was a universal attribute of seventeenth-century societies.[47] Folk culture was both a source of material for the early modern theater and a place of departure for the culture of the market society. Localism had long had ways of using performance as a public service. "Rough music," or "skimmington" was a spontaneous, bawdy, and often violent public performance that impacted the way local dissent against perceived tyranny was expressed.

In North America, this type of performance also found a more serious and deadly expression vis-à-vis the Native Americans. An example of this was the attack by the so-called Paxton Boys on a group of Susquehannock and other Native Americans living in Lancaster County, Virginia. In December 1763, in the aftermath of the French-Indian War and Pontiac's Rebellion – a war of empire – a group of Euro-Americans living in the Indian-White frontier village of Paxtang, near Harrisburg, attacked these peaceful Indians who had long traded with Euro-Americans in the area. These self-styled vigilantes, largely of Scotch-Irish heritage, were frustrated with the perceived lack of violent action by the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania government against Indians in western Pennsylvania. After the "Paxtons" killed six unarmed Indians at their village, about fifty of them marched on

47 Bernard Bailyn has analyzed the source areas of the colonial population in *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America Just Prior to the Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

the Lancaster workhouse where Governor John Penn had given fourteen of the Susquehannocks protection. The vigilantes broke into the workhouse and killed and mutilated all fourteen. Warrants for their arrest were issued, but no one would come forward to identify them. Eventually, about five hundred vigilantes set out to "cleanse" Pennsylvania of Indians and since it was two hundred miles to the west to Indian Country, they went after the one hundred-forty who had gathered in Philadelphia for protection. The British troops and the Philadelphia militia, who had been raised by Benjamin Franklin, provided protection for the Indians, although a third of them died of smallpox contracted in their residence of refuge.[48]

This was a reminder that street theater can escalate into murder, unlike the more docile stage theater which may rationalize such murder, but does not actually engage in it. Indeed, assuaging the realities of such things was one of its functions. The Paxton episode represents a segment of the performance spectrum that resides between "rough music" (discussed below) and the theater of war. The Paxton Boys' story was made into a play in the years following the event. Purportedly "translated from the French by a Native of Dingall," it conflates the Paxton vigilantes with Presbyterians and "Mob Rule." In the play, the Presbyterians are upset that the "Miscreants of the Established Church of England [protect the] heathen enemies . . . against the Law of nature, the Law of Reason, and the Law of God." The play takes a humorous view of the Paxtons, and essentially is commentary that the community needs to stand up to this kind of "bottom-up" action, which was ultimately a threat

48 See Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Viking, 2001), 436-437; Wilbur R. Jacobs, "British Colonial Attitudes and Policies Toward the Indian in the American Colonies," in Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson, eds., *Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), 85.

not only to Native Americans, but to the more organized approach to imperial expansion taken by centralized British power.[49] In this example, one can see that the meanings of the performances of both the actual and dramatic "Paxton Boys" are complex. Crowd performances can and did cross the line from public protest to mass murder in the colonies. Yet, as historian Paul Gilje and others have observed, these performances had a specific function in ventilating plebian resentments, and were thus often uncontested or only mildly contested by authority.[50] Because this was an expanding empire, those possessing the object of the expansion were, after all, fair game.

"Rough music" was more typically a way for a community to deal extra-legally with individuals who disrupted the social order or were considered threatening. Less extreme treatment might include being dragged out of one's house or perhaps waylaid on the road, raised up onto and/or tied to a rough-hewn beam or rail, or perhaps set backwards on a donkey and ridden around town for all to see, while the crowd beat on drums, pots and pans, and announced the misdeeds of the offender. Although they did occasionally turn violent and even murderous, more often there would be a beating or a dunking at the end of the procession. In most cases, the individual was either driven from the community or "cured" of their miscreant behavior.

This was most often employed when officials became lax regarding the

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49 *The Paxton Boys, A Farce*, translated from the original French by "A Native of Dingall," 1764 (*Three Centuries of Drama: America, 1714-1830*). I have found nothing connecting this to an original French version other than the claim of translation. Johnson and Burling do not mention the play in their *Calendar*.

50 Paul Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 22.

enforcement of certain social norms. Adulterers, wife-beaters, "scolds" (women who incessantly "brow-beat" their husbands), greedy landlords, disease-carriers who did not quarantine themselves, and other offenders were the typical targets of this behavior.[51] "Skimmington," so-named for the skimming ladle that was often used to beat on pots and pans during the event, was relatively rare in the colonies until after 1730 when a gradual increase was seen leading up to the Revolution. This was due to the rise of an increasingly foreign court system that paid little attention to local goings-on. Where local magistrates had before been willing to issue comeuppance for untoward behavior, this new group of bureaucrats was not particularly interested in matters that were not explicit violations of statute law.[52]

Skimmington had a particularly uneasy relationship with the authorities after passage of the Stamp Act in 1765. A pre-capitalist sense of moral economy and localism lay beneath the increase in civic republican consciousness found expression among the less educated as tensions grew between King-in-Parliament and the American colonists. Skimmington had always been concerned with popular enforcement of the "moral economy" when the officials failed to do so, but with the perceived "corrupt" nature of the British government's policies in the 1760s and '70s, a political aspect was added. There was a playful aspect to this development, in some cases. In Boston's first protest action after the Stamp Act, about 300 little boys marched in a procession with a flag labeled "King, Pitt, & Liberty forever," protesting

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51 Steven J. Stewart, "Skimmington in the Middle and New England Colonies," in William Pencak, et.al., eds, *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), 42

52 Ibid., 44; Brendan McConville, "The Rise of Rough Music: Reflections on an Ancient New Custom in Eighteenth-Century New Jersey," in Pencak, et.al, eds., *Riot and Revelry*, 92.

against Stamp Master Andrew Oliver.[53] A couple of weeks later, young boys reportedly started a fire beginning a riotous evening that included the destruction of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson's house. Boston papers reported that "a number of boys from fourteen to sixteen years of age, some mere children, did a great deal of damage."[54] These types of street theater and performance influenced the stage from the bottom up – first in England, then in the colonies.[55] Coupled with the widely read literature of the English "Country" Radicals and the Whig dissenters, these street performances put the notions of "virtue" and "corruption," in a political sense, into the public mind.

The Stamp Act generated powerful emotional responses grounded not only in an intellectual awareness of civic republicanism, but also the moral economic sensibility of pre-modern folk culture. In the absence of official action, street theatrics were employed in ways brought from Europe in the collective memory of the community. Mock funerals of an anthropomorphized "Liberty" and other cases of "rough music" expressed the general discord in the absence of access to official power. For example, a mob gathered at the home of Henry Laurens in Charleston, South Carolina; a place where empire in the form of the Plantation Complex dominated the economy, the culture, and the socio-political hierarchy, and where "polite" theater had been consistently popular.[56] Sailors in blackface and masks

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53 Letter, John Avery to John Collins, 19 August, 1765, quoted in William Pencak, "Play as Prelude to Revolution: Boston, 1765-1776," in Pencak, ed., *Riot and Revelry*, 128.

54 *Boston Post-Boy*, 2 September, 1765, quoted in ibid, 129.

55 An excellent anthology on the English side of the Atlantic is Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, eds., *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). This influence on the American stage is more apparent after the Revolution, as discussed in Chapter Four.

56 See Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century* (Columbia, SC: The State

marched to Laurens house on a rumor that his basement contained the despised stamped paper, waiting to be forcibly sold to the colonists. Once they had a look and were convinced that that was not the case, they disbanded, but not before they "menaced very loudly [and] now and then handled me uncouthly."[57]

Similarly in Boston, street theater included a female effigy representing a chained "America" and displaying a sign expressing the public resentment against stamp distributors: "My Son! Remember that I have treated you with the utmost tenderness, and bestow'd on you my highest honours, pity your country, and put not on me these chains." Her ungrateful prodigal sons were depicted as saying, "Perish my country, so that I get that reward."[58] After the Stamp Act was repealed, the Sons of Liberty erected a four-sided obelisk in Boston that depicted the colonists' devotion to liberty. The King, Queen, John Wilkes and Robert Pitt were seen as the heroes of repeal, and the goddess Liberty was depicted with the words:

> O thou whom next to Heav'n we most revere,
> Fair LIBERTY! Thou lovely Goddess hear!
> Have we not woo'd thee, won thee, held thee long,
> Lain in thy Lap and melted on thy Tongue . . .

The Stamp Act responses underscore the mythic character of not only the imperial "Commerce and Glory" of Britain, but Euro-American resistance as well. It

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Company, 1924); and Mary Julia Curtis, *The Early Charleston Stage, 1703-1798* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Indiana, 1968). The term "plantation complex" comes from Philip Curtin's, *Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

57 George C. Rogers, Jr., et.al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 38-40; quoted in Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 211.

58 *Boston Evening Post*, 9 September, 1765.

is this mythic character of the discourse that allowed the prosecution of imperial wars, the existence of class systems, and the sustenance of power structures. In the above example, King George and Queen Charlotte were seen as intercessors for the colonists *vis-à-vis* the patrons and placemen who were attempting to reduce the freedom of the colonists and the lower classes, generally. The term "enslavement" was widely used in street theater, in Mrs. Warren's plays, and by the revolutionary pamphleteers in reference to these officials' intentions for the plebian citizenry.[59] In reality, the Hanovers had been supporters of the economic imperial project and George III had every intention of restoring as much as possible the King's prerogative to further an imperial economic agenda.[60]

As for Wilkes, his career was a checkered one, although he was often called the "toast of the colonies" or the "darling of the mob," depending on one's politics. His depiction in colonial protests against the King-in-Parliament power structure is well-documented.[61] Yet Wilkes initially bought his seat in Parliament, which was an accepted practice of the day, though certainly corrupt from a classical republican viewpoint. John Brewer has noted that Wilkes functioned as a sort of "lord of misrule" for the colonists since he was, as a resident of England, an abstraction in the colonies. His mythical image was an antithesis to the mythical Lord Bute, the tutor

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59 For pamphleteers, see Bernard Bailyn, ed., with the assistance of Jane N. Garrett, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1760-1776* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 1965).

60 See Shaw, *American Patriots*, 52-58. More broadly, see John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); also Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick connect the dots back to the "bourgeois King" William and the "Court" party from the 1690s to the 1790s. See their *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13-29.

61 Silverman, *Cultural History of the American Revolution*, passim

and chief advisor of the young George III, and a figure who Wilkes relentlessly attacked.[62] In reality, Wilkes was a complex man who was something of a paradox. As Peter Shaw has characterized him, Wilkes was "A scurrilous newspaper libeler, [who] sparked the battle against censorship. A place-seeker, he advanced the principle of free elections. A snob, he attracted the love of the common people and elevated their self-respect." But it was his self-depiction as an advocate of American freedom from the heavy-handed policies of the Grenvilles, Butes, and Townshends that made his image an icon and lightning rod for issues central to perceptions and ideals of good government.

William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, was a successor to the governmental office of "Prime Minister" created by Robert Walpole in the 1720s and '30s. The hated Stamp Act was repealed as he entered his second stint as Prime Minister in 1766 and, along with the King and Wilkes, was given credit for the repeal. He had already been considered a virtuous minister and was known as the "Great Commoner." Seen as a virtuous "patriot," Pitt was the precursor of the mythic Wilkes. Wilkes supplanted Pitt in the public mind when the latter accepted a baronetcy and a pension from the King, making him a "placeman" and "pensioner," two of the worst things to be by colonial Whig standards, which were much more influenced by classical republicanism than in England.[63]

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62 Brewer, *Party Ideology*; Shaw, *American Patriots*, 60. There are numerous biographies of Wilkes, the most recent being Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), and John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006). See also George F.E. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study, 1763-1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); R.W. Postgate, *That Devil Wilkes* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1929).

63 Shaw, *American Patriots*, 53, 58.

In all of the above cases, the individuals championed and iconized by radical Whigs in the colonies were supporters of furthering the goals of empire. On the British side of the Atlantic, policy-makers wished to maintain a mercantilist policy in North America. In order to maximize profits, expenses would have to be kept to a minimum which meant keeping colonists near the eastern seaboard where finished goods were more easily sold. "Colonists should be kept near the Sea Coasts or near the Banks of Navigable Rivers . . . [and Britain must] set bounds to the Increment of the People, and to the Extent of the Settlement in that Country," wrote Benjamin Franklin in the 1750s, when he still sided with the British form of imperialism.[64] William Knox, who was instrumental in formulating Britain's imperial policy with respect to North America after the French-Indian War through his influence on both Lord Bute and George Grenville, advised that the Indians could be "useful Allies." "The Apprehensions which the People have of those Savages, will always induce them to look upon the Station of Troops amongst them as necessary for their safety." The troops were seen as necessary for the maintaining the colonists' dependence upon the Mother Country.[65] So from the perspective of British officialdom, the indigenous Americans, acting in their own interests of holding onto their traditional lands, would serve the British Empire's attempt to keep a lid on its potentially "over-mighty subjects" in North America. From this point of view, the struggle between Britain

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64 Benjamin Franklin, *The Increase of Great Britain Considered, with Regard to Her Colonies* (London, 1751), quoted in Thomas C. Barrow, "A Project for Imperial Reform: 'Hints Respecting the Settlement of Our American Provinces,' 1763," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 24:1 (Jan. 1967), 110.

65 William Knox, "Hints Respecting the Settlement of Our American Provinces," quoted in Barrow, *WMQ*. Barrow found this document in the British library and speculated, with Charles Ritchison, that it was written by Knox, and argues that its authorship is less important than its content, which was certainly advocated by Knox, as well as Grenville, Bute, Towshend, et.al.

and her North American colonies is not so different from the Wars of Empire fought in North America between Britain and France and to a lesser extent, Spain. With this perspective it is also more difficult to deny that the fledgling United States was not an empire *a priori* to its acquiring independent sovereignty.

While street performance, "mob" violence, and other public representations of discontent over policies deemed offensive to colonists have been documented for some time, the context of these phenomena has not been analyzed in the context of empire. There is more to this aspect of colonial performance than the killing of Indians, the humiliating of wife-beaters, or even the protest of unpopular taxes. Sailors, for example, had protested the practice of empressment for centuries. With the various European powers waging wars of empire in the eighteenth century, sailors were at a premium, and press gangs were prolific. Pressing had been abolished in the British New World at the end of Queen Anne's War and renewed for the West Indies in 1746.[66] In the fall of 1745, the *HMS Wager's* press gang had killed two men in a sweep of the Boston wharf. The following spring, Vice-Admiral Peter Warren recorded, another ship he had sent to Boston, the *Shirley*, had met with such hostility both ashore and from the crew, that the captain was afraid to go ashore for fear of being arrested or murdered by "the mob" for pressing.[67]

This vein of performance – plebian resistance to forced military service, by definition an anti-imperial act – represents a historical force often overlooked or discounted: that of the polity. The rioting of sailors, who were a mixture of

66 Act, 6 Anne, c. 37; Act, 19 George II, c. 30.

67 Letter, Warren to Thomas Corbett, 2 June, 1746, in Julian Gwyn, ed., *The Royal Navy and North America: The Warren Papers, 1736-1752* (London: Navy Records Society, 1973), 261-262.

nationalities, ethnicities, and races, forced political theorists such as Samuel Adams to acknowledge that the "rights of Englishmen" were actually universal rights. Indeed, in his radical publication, the *Independent Advertiser*, influenced by press riots and the mid-century resurgence of republicanism, Adams wrote that "All Men are by Nature on a Level; born with an equal Share of Freedom, and endow'd with Capacities nearly alike." As historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have pointed out, this looks back to the Levellers' *Agreement of the People* of the 1640s and forward to the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776.[68] And it demonstrates that street performances were not always the agents of empire, but were often agents of a class-based resistance to its more egregious offences.

By the 1760s, the culture of empire and its theater were as much a part of Anglo-American society in North America as they were a part of society in England. This makes it all the more ironic that, in the Age of Revolution, when colonists began searching for a non-British identity, it was the relationship forged by the Quakers and the Delaware Indians that proved to be the most influential. One Delaware leader that ultimately provided Euro-American consciousness with this non-British identity was the legendary Tamanend, or Tammany.

Tammany signed two of the treaties that indigenous peoples made with William Penn, in 1683 and 1692. But of more lasting significance was the Tammany that took up residence in the Euro-American psyche. This appears to have taken hold in the Schuylkill Fishing Company of Philadelphia around 1732. Claiming that their

68 *Independent Advertiser*, 11 January, 1748; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 216-217.

fishing rights in the river had been given to them by one of these treaties, they began to champion Tammany (whose name reportedly meant "the affable"), and attribute mottoes to him. As with Thomas Morton and his indigenous friends in colonial Massachusetts Bay, the day May 1 became a day for incorporating Anglo and indigenous American identities. It was the first day of fishing season and an ancient holiday in the English folk tradition, and by mid-century Tammany became the day's patron saint. Thus was born St. Tammany, and his day was regularly celebrated in both Philadelphia and Annapolis. When tensions between the colonies and the Mother Country increased after the Stamp Act, the newly formed Sons of Liberty adopted "King" Tammany as a symbol of American identity *vis-à-vis* Britain. Of course, colonists came from a variety of source regions in Europe, but something they all had in common that separated their experience from individuals in the Old Country was a relationship with Native Americans. In some quarters, Tammany's legend proved to be a uniting factor in the pre-war revolutionary period.[69]

This unity is strongly felt in a contemporary song called the "Song of St. Tammany's Day," and set to the traditional jig "The Hounds Are All Out." Because of the richness of this folk expression, I include twenty verses previously published, but there must have been many more, given the tendency for English folksongs to have dozens in not hundreds of possible verses. This drinking song represents the mythos of a sub-culture of empire forming in an Atlantic context:

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69 Donald A. Grind, Jr., and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplars of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: UCLA Native American Studies Center, 1991), Chapter 9, "The American Synthesis"; Joseph White Norwood, *The Tammany Legend* (Boston: Meador, 1938), passim.

Of St. George or St. Blute, let the Lauriat sing,
Of Pharaoh or Pluto of old,
While he rhymes forth their praise in false glittering lays,
I'll sing of St. Tammany the bold my brave boys, I'll sing of St. Tammany the bold.

Let Hibernia's sons boast, make Patrick their toast;
And Scots Andrew's fame spread abroad.
Potatoes and oats, and Welch leeks for Welch goats,
Was never St. Tammany's food, brave boys, etc.

In freedom's bright cause Tamm'ny pled with applause;
And reasoned most justly from nature;
For this, this was his song, all, all, the day long:
Liberty's the right of each creature, brave boys, etc.

Whilst under an oak his great parliament sat,
His throne was the crotch of a tree;
With Solomon's look, without statutes or book,
He wisely sent forth his decree, my brave boys, etc.

His subjects stood round, not the least noise or sound,
Whilst freedom blazed full in each face;
So plain were the laws, and each pleaded his cause;
That might Bute, North, and Mansfield disgrace, my brave boys, etc.

No duties nor stamp, their blest liberty cramps,
A King, tho' no tyrant was he;
He did oft times declare, nay, sometimes would swear,
The least of his subjects was free, my brave boys, etc.

He, as king of the woods, of the rivers and floods,
Had a right all beast to control:
Yet content with a few, to give nature her due;
So gen'rous was Tammany's soul! My brave boys, etc.

In the morn he arose, and a hunting he goes,
Bold Nimrod his second was he.
For his breakfast he'd take a large venison steak,
And despised your slip-slops and tea, my brave boys, etc.

While all in a row, with squaw, dog, and bow,
Vermillion adorning his face,
With feathery head he ranged the woods wide.

St. George, sure, had never such grace, my brave boys, etc.

His jetty black hair such as buckskin saints wear
Perfumed with bears' grease well smeared
Which illum'ned the saint's face and ran down apace
Like oil from Aaron's old beard, my brave boys, etc.

The strong nervous deer, with amazing career,
In swiftness he'd fairly run down;
And like Sampson, would tear wolf, lion, or bear
Ne'er was such a saint as our own, my brave boys, etc.

When he'd run down a stag, he behind him would lag;
For a noble a soul had he!
He'd stop, tho' he lost it, tradition reports it,
To give him fresh chance to get free, my brave boys, etc.

With a mighty strong arm, and a masculine bow,
His arrow he drew to the head,
And as sure as he shot it was ever his lot,
His prey it fell instantly dead, my brave boys, etc.

Hi table he spread where the venison bled,
Be thankful, he used to say;
E'd laugh and he'd sing, tho' a saint and a king,
And sumptuously dine on his prey, my brave boys, etc.

On an old stump he sat, without cap or hat,
When supper was ready to eat,
Snap, his do, he stood by; and cast a sheep's eye,
For ven'son's the king of all meat, my brave boys, etc.

Like Isaac of old, and both cast in one mold,
Tho' a wigwam was Tamm'ny's cottage,
He lov'ed sav'ry meat, such as patriarchs eat,
Of ven'son and squirrel made pottage, brave boys, etc.

When fourscoreyears old, as I've oft times been told,
To doubt it, sure, would not be right,
With a pipe in his jaw he'd buss his old squaw,
And get a young saint, ev'ry night, my brave boys, etc.

As old age came on, he grew blind, deaf, and dumb,
Tho' his sport, 'twere hard to keep from it,

Quite tired of life, bid adieu to his wife
And blazed like a trail of a comet, brave boys, etc.

What country on earth, then, did ever give birth
To such a magnanimous saint?
His acts far excel all that history tell
And language too feeble to paint, my brave boys, etc.

Now to finish my song, a full flowing bowl
I'll quaff and sing all the long day,
And with punch and wine paint my cheeks for the saint,
And hail every First of sweet May, my brave boys, etc.[70]

This mythic Tammany gave Euro-Americans a non-European source of identity. The process of separation can be seen in nearly every verse. Followers set biblical, classical, and folk heroes from the Old World aside for the freedom-championing Tammany. In this natural state, Tammany would exercise the wisdom of Solomon in his fair and just rule. Also a master of the natural world, he gave animals in the chase a fair chance to escape his deadly accurate bow. Virile at eighty years of age, this mythic Tammany eschewed a decrepit old age for life as a comet. In 1773, the Tammany Society of Philadelphia held a ceremony to "canonize" St. Tammany and change their name to the "Sons of St. Tammany."

"The Song of St. Tammany" is a window into the values of the members of the Tammany Society. But more than that, this song represents a step in a process of usurping an indigenous identity by Euro-Americans. The mythic construction of identity in the service of empire would increase after the Revolution. Tammany would be the subject of a popular play by Mrs. Anne Julia (Kemble) Hatton in the

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70 Taken from Grenville Vernon, ed., *Yankee Doodle-Do: A Collection of Songs of the Early American Stage* (New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd., 1927), 25-28. He includes the song with his entry on John Leacock's play *The Fall of British Tyranny*. He does not attribute the song to the play, and because of the character of the song, my sense is that it was more at home in the pub than on the stage.

1790s, and "Metamora" would assume this same mantel on the nineteenth-century stage (both discussed below).

Such raw sentiments of the polity were rare in pre-Revolution playhouses. Rather than expressing plurality, mythic images portraying non-white peoples emerged in British colonial theater eliciting empire. Native Americans, Africans, and African Americans had to be described in ways that both validated and minimized their humanity – particularly in this era of humanist republican rhetoric – and assigned to them the blame for their plight. A popular stock play that represented non-white peoples as inherently inferior and rationalizing their subjugation was Isaac Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock*. This was a popular play that created a sensation in the character "Mungo," portrayed and popularized in New York by Lewis Hallam, Jr. after the war.[71] Charles Dibdin wrote the music for this "opera" and originally played Mungo in England. The story is fairly simple on the surface: set in Spain, the aging master of the house, Don Diego, has taken under his wing, ostensibly to marry, the young, beautiful, and naive Leonora. Don Diego must go away for a few days, but he is very concerned that, at his advanced age, the temptations available to Leonora will cause her to stray while he is gone. He takes up the issue with Mungo, his house slave, in a conversation that captures the power relations between the two. Mungo enters the room carrying a hamper:

> Mungo: Go, get you down, you damn hamper, you carry me now. Curse my old massa, sending me always here and dere for one something to me tire like a mule – curse him imperance – and him damn insurance.
> Diego. How now?
> Mungo: Ah, massa! Bless your heart.

71Johnson and Burling, 68.

Diego: What's that you are muttering, sirrah?
Mungo: Noting, massa, only me say you very good massa.
Diego: What do you leave your load down there for?
Mungo: Massa, me lily tire.
Diego: Take it up, rascal.
Mungo: Yes, bless your heart, massa.
Diego: No, lay it down: now I think on't, come hither.
Mungo: What you say, massa?
Diego: Can you be honest?
Mungo: Me no savee, massa, you never ax me before.
Diego: Can you tell truth?
Mungo: What you give me, massa?
Diego: There's a pistreen for you; now tell me, do you know of any ill going on in my house!
Mungo: Ah, massa, you lick me every day with your rattan; I'm sure, massa, that's mishceif enough for poor neger man.
Diego: So, so.
Mungo: La, massa, how could you have a heart to lick poor neger man, as you lick me last Thursday?
Diego: If you have not a mind I should chastise you now, hold your tongue.
Mungo: Yes, massa, if you no lick me again.
Diego: Listen to me, I say.
Mungo: You know massa, me bery good servant –
Diego: Then you will go on?
Mungo: And ought to be use kine –
Diego: If you utter another syllable –
Mungo: And I'm sure, massa, you can't deny but I worky worky – I dress a victuals, and run errands, and wash a house, and make a beds, and scrub a shoes, and wait a table.
Diego: Take that. *[Strikes him.]* Now will you listen to me?
Mungo: La, massa, if ever I saw –
Diego: I am going abroad, and shall not return till to-morrow morning. During the night, I charge you not to sleep a wink, but be watchful as a lynx, and keep walking up and down the entry, that if you hear the least noise you may alarm the family. Stay here, perverse animal, take care that nobody approaches the door; I am going in, and shall be out again in a moment.
Mungo: So I must be stay in a cold all night, and have no sleep, and get no tanks neither; then him call me tief, and rogue, and rascal to tempt me:

[Song]:

Dear heart, what a terrible life am I led!
A dog has a better, that's shelter'd and fed;
Night and day, 'tis de same,
My pain is dere game:
Me wish to de Lord me was dead.

Whate'ers to be done,
Poor Blacky must run;
Mungo here, Mungo dere,
Mungo every where;
Above and below,
Sirrah, come; sirrah, go;
Do so, and do so.
Oh! Oh!
Me wish to de Lord me was dead.[72]

Obviously, race and class are entwined in Mungo's role as an "Untouchable," i.e., a member of the slave caste. Should he ever gain his freedom, the best he can hope for is to be free at the bottom of society with little or no enfranchisement. Yet, one can take his garrulousness as a type of resistance from both a class and race perspective. Indeed, Charles Dibdin had Mungo sing a song when Don Diego was away and Mungo got into Diego's wine:

We dance and we sing,
Till we make house ring,
And, tied in his garters,
Old Massa may swing.

Or, one could take Mungo's ramblings as a sign of his inferiority since it would seem he clearly does not know how to carry on a proper conversation. Many probably saw as humorous the scene where Diego strikes Mungo. In this way, both pro-slavery and anti-slavery interests might be served, a boon to the theater manager who needed to sell tickets to both groups.

The play was first performed in the colonies in 1769, the same year as its first performance in England. It was performed, as far as can be determined, twenty-six times in British America, which made it the seventh most popular play in the colonies

72Isaac Bickerstaff, *The Padlock, as originally performed at the theatre, Boston*, in *Early American Imprints*, Evans 28296, 3-4; originally published in North America (Boston: William Spotswood, 1795).

while it was the third most popular in London in the years up to 1774.[73] The importance of the dual meanings embedded in *The Padlock* would only gain in importance into the nineteenth century – *The Padlock* ranks tenth on a list of the most-performed blackface plays between 1787 and 1843, and most of the other nine were from the 1820s and '30s.[74] Mungo was in important proto-type for delineating the needed perception of the inferiority of blacks.[75] Theater worked to facilitate the status quo, i.e., an economic empire dependent on low-cost labor and "free" land. Mungo was a proto version of Sambo, the "happy darky" who, in this case, is not so happy. Mungo's and Sambo's offspring can be seen in the twentieth-century character Step-n-Fetchit. He does not seem to have much motivation other than to complain about his lot in life. Indeed, Mungo fails to accomplish the task to which Don Diego charges him, allowing Leonora's suitor Leander into the house, circumventing the padlock Diego had left on the front door. When Diego arrives unexpectedly in the middle of the night, Mungo is drunk, Leonora is in the garden with Leander, and Don Diego realizes the folly of trying to force marriage to an old man on a young beauty like Leonora. While certainly not a main character, Mungo's

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73 Johnson and Burling, 68.

74 Two authors stand out for their work on the dual meaning of blackface performance in the theater: W.T. Lhamon, Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), as well as *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. Neither of these authors reference empire, per se, however.

75 See Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 16. In addition to the works on blackface cited above, see also Lhamon, "Constance Rourke's Secret Reserve," Introduction to Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character (*Reprint, Gainesville: Florida State University Press, 1986); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

popularity placed him in the center of Anglo-American consciousness and represented an early treatment of a non-Shakespearean African descendant on the Euro-American stage.[76]

So in addition to the culture of empire reflected in the "polite" theater of bourgeois Britain, it was reflected in the rhetoric of republicanism and even some of the expressions of folk culture as they manifested in the colonies. The masque *Alfred* and similar plays such as *Gustavus Vasa* and *Douglas* expressed conflated notions of republicanism and empire. College plays, more sheltered from anti-theater sentiment, also expressed an imperial republicanism conflated with libertarian economics. Class issues were reflected in *The Beggar's Opera* as well as in the traditional ways of folk culture, yet empire was horrifically expressed in the deeds of the "Paxton Boys" and others. When theater was banned in 1774, the plays of Mercy Otis Warren satirically expressed a type of republicanism that both rejected the corruption of the British Empire while embracing the heritage of expansionism at the expense of indigenous Americans. Targets of conquest and so-called "civilizing" forces needed to be justified or at least rationalized. The drive for resources and markets as well as land in the English-speaking world created a cultural need for explanatory myths. While "politeness" and various forms of republicanism provided those myths, conditions continued to change on the cutting edge of the expanding empire. The myths needed to adjust to changing conditions in North America during and after the break between the colonies and the Mother Country. The next chapter delves into that adjustment.

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76 For an in-depth literary analysis of Mungo, see Susan Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater," in *European Romantic Review* 18:2 (April 2007), 139-147.

Chapter Three
Performing a Civil War: Empire in the Age of Revolution

The theater season of 1773 was one of the best seasons for David Douglass's American Company of Comedians in their history. But due to the escalating tensions and potential violence between the Britain and the colonies, the following year the First Continental Congress passed a resolution to:

> [E]ncourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horseracing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments.[1]

Passed some months before the Lexington-Concord confrontation, this resolution indicates the seriousness with which at least twelve of the colonies took the events of 1774, particularly the "Intolerable Acts," which added martial law to the relations between colonies and Mother Country. By the time of the Revolutionary War, performance in the colonies reflected the ambiguity and diversity within the imperial structure – Whig, Tory, radical – that characterized this relatively libertarian milieu. For those who frequented the theater of the larger towns, the mythology of the libertarian empire had been internalized. The language of commercial expansion was the rhetorical coin of the realm for them. Others who associated themselves with a rural plebian folk culture or working class interests, things were not so cut-and-dried.[2] Some of these, like farmers in the hinterland or sailors on the open sea, were

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1 Section 8 of the "Non-Importation Act," First Continental Congress, 1774; quoted in Barnard Hewitt, *Theatre U.S.A, 1665-1957* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

2 Alfred F. Young, *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976); Christopher Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Allan Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins ofAmerican Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press,

less enamored with the glories of empire than those seeking to amass wealth in the Atlantic market economy. But the Paxton Boys and other incidents had demonstrated the strong desire for land and the concomitant ethnic cleansing that went with democratized empire. This democratization process would only accelerate after the break with the Mother Country. This chapter investigates how theatrical and street performances during the American Revolution revealed a nascent democratized empire that would redefine imperial expansion in North America. While the rebelling Continentals took issue with the Mother Country over her oppressive policies toward them, many of those same rebels were happy to extend a similar heavy-handedness to their compatriots, to say nothing of the indigenous peoples regarding land ownership. By widening the focus and including indigenous and African Americans in an analysis of these performances, this chapter makes the case that the American Revolution became more clearly a civil war in an expansive economic empire that ended with a permanent political division between the two sides.

The "Non-Importation Act" – the boycott against British goods inspired by the Coercive Acts – represented an alliance between colonial financial interests and religious and secular republicanism against the perceived corruption of the British imperial presence in North America. This can be seen in plays written "for the closet" by Mercy Otis Warren, sister of the radical Whig barrister James Otis and husband of James Warren of Plymouth.[3] Warren's brand of republicanism was

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1992); Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); et.al.

3 There are numerous biographies of Mercy Otis Warren, most recently Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), hereafter *MOW*; Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan

particularly "Yankee," rooted in the local New England culture of fourth- and fifth-generation New World Puritanism. Both the Otis and Warren families were descended from Mayflower passengers, and shared a radical Whig view that restricting rights to a privileged few was an inherently corrupt endeavor and should be stopped – violently if necessary. The Otis clan in particular had a contentious relationship with the Hutchinson family and especially Thomas Hutchinson, the Chief Justice and later Governor of Massachusetts. The Otis family was particularly resentful of Hutchinson because he had been appointed Chief Justice rather than James Otis by colonial Governor Francis Bernard.[4] Although these plays were never performed, they circulated widely before and during the Revolution and provide a window into the minds of those who were leading the opposition, particularly in Massachusetts, to the heavy-handed policies and King-in-Parliament sovereignty under George III.

Mercy Warren's first published play was *The Adulateur*, a script directed at the hated Hutchinson who had attained the governorship of Massachusetts by the time the play first appeared as a serial in Isaiah Thomas's *Massachusetts Spy* in March and April of 1772.[5] The much-touted republican values permeating Warren's work is highlighted whenever it is discussed. But the focus has rarely, if ever, been on its

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Davidson, 1995). Also see Alice Brown, *Mercy Warren* (New York: Scribner's , 1896); Katharine Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958). Most work on Mrs. Warren is contained in anthologies and journals. A useful selected bibliography can be found in the Richards biography, 179-185.

4 Richards, *MOW*, 9. See also John J. Waters, Jr., *The Otis Family in Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

5 A longer and somewhat altered version of the play was published as a pamphlet in 1773. Benjamin Franklin V, ed., *The Plays and Poems of Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Scholars Facsimiles and Reproductions, 1980), viii.

imperial aspects, subliminal though they may be. There is no question that the Otis-Warren clan opposed the kind of centralized power imperial Britain represented; indeed, they eventually became Jeffersonian Republicans. But there is an element of bloodlust in this rhetoric that speaks not only of willingness for martyrdom, but is a remnant of Puritan attitudes toward those outside the fold, particularly Native Americans. The language itself harkens back to Rome and the transition period from republic to empire. In the pamphlet version of the play, "Brutus" is the central hero figure, (representing Warren's brother James Otis), who is juxtaposed against the Hutchinson-inspired "Rapatio." In establishing the republican credentials of Brutus and his colleague Cassius, Warren reveals a bit of Puritan history. On a street in "Servia," (Boston), Brutus says, to no one in particular:

> Is this the once fam'd mistress of the north
> The sweet retreat of freedom? Dearly purchased!
> A *clime matur'd with blood*; from whose rich soil,
> Has sprung a glorious harvest . . . [my italics][6]

And after Brutus bemoans "the sullen ghost of bondage, [who] / Stalks in full view," Cassius laments "our noble ancestors, / Who liv'd for freedom and for freedom dy'd." These noble ancestors fought "for freedom" in two basic contexts. The first was wresting control of the land from the indigenous population, the Wampanoags, Pequots, Narragansetts, etc.[7] The second was in the wars of empire where the British mobilized her colonial populations primarily against the French for control of North America. If one of these was more "imperial" than the other, given the relatively

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6 Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur, a Tragedy, as it is now acted in Upper Servia*, in Franklin, ed., *The Plays and Poetry of Mercy Otis Warren*, 5.

7 *The Adulateur*, 6.

benevolent form of French imperial activity, the destruction of the indigenous societies for the sake of having a land base from which to grow an Anglo-American society would seem the likely choice. Indeed, subsequent lines reveal that this is the case.

Cassius continues with first an appeal to the republican values of the ancestors, "Who scorn'ed to roll in affluence, if that state / Was sicken'd o'er with the dread name of slaves." Then comes a reference to the imperial imposition of power for territory, "Who in this desart *[sic]* stock'd with beasts and men, / Whose untam'd souls breath'd nought but slaughter." So in this "republican" play directed at the perceived tyrannical policies of the "adulateur" of empire, (Thomas Hutchinson), the aggressive militaristic practices of earlier English colonists against the indigenous peoples, who by all accounts had initially taken a largely benevolent view toward the English, are glorified.[8] Warren has Cassius continue in this vein:

> Grasped at freedom, and they nobly won it;
> Then smil'd and dy'd contented, Should these heroes,
> Start from their tombs and view their dear possessions,
> The price of so much labor, cost and blood,
> Gods! What a pang 'twould cost them; yes, they'd weep,
> Nor weep in vain. That good old spirit,
> Which warm'd them once, would rouse to noble actions.
> E're they would *cringe* they'd bathe their swords in blood;
> In heaps they'd fall, and on the pile of freedom,
> Expire like heroes, or they'd save their country.[9]

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8 See, for example, Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, English, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford, 1982).

9 *The Adulateur*, 6.

When patriots Junius and Portius enter to inform Brutus and Cassius of an indignant mob that righteously marches against the hated Rapatio and his cronies, more bloodthirsty rhetoric ensues:

> Illustrious shades! Who hover o'er this country,
> And watch like guardian angels o'er its rights:
> By all that blood, that precious blood they spilt,
> To gain for us the happiest boon of Heaven:
> By life – by death – or still to catch you more,
> By LIBERTY, by BONDAGE, I conjure you.

To which all four answer:

> Nor is it vain. We swear, e'er we'll be slaves,
> We'll pour our choicest blood. No terms shall move us.
> These streets we'll pave with many an human skull.
> Carnage, blood and death, shall be familiar,
> Tho' Servia weep her desolated realms.10

In the heart of Yankee republicanism, one finds the rhetoric of war, conquest, and empire not only present, but a central feature of discourse and, as it were, written in blood.

This nativist republicanism was at the heart of the rebellion against a Mother Country that many colonists increasingly viewed as a separate political entity. There was a clear sense of betrayal in Mercy Warren's rhetorical attack on Thomas Hutchinson – also a native of Massachusetts and direct descendant of Anne Hutchinson. Thomas Hutchinson, like many colonists, had spent his life pursuing wealth and status within the Walpolean imperial system, engaging as a "placeman" for King-in-Parliament, even moving to England for a time.11 Through the voice of

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10 Ibid., 8.

11 See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University

Rapatio, Hutchinson's metaphorical character, Warren's views of Hutchinson's corruption are unambiguous:

> Hail happy day! In which I find my wishes,
> My gayest wishes crown'd. Brundo[12] retir'd,
> The stage is clear. Whatever gilded prospects
> E-er swam before me – Honor, places, pensions –
> All at command – Oh! My full heart! 'twill burst![13]

There are also examples of Warren depicting Rapatio's emulation of the Roman Caesar. In the first Act he sees himself as a Nero should his designs for power and revenge against the "patriots" fail. In the real world, a mob had sacked Hutchinson's house after the 1765 Stamp Act and Warren's Rapatio carries the grudge:

> I'll let the scoundrels see who sways the scepter,
> Before I'll suffer this, I'll throw the state,
> In dire confusion, nay I'll hurl it down,
> O'er the fields of death, with hast'ning step I'll speed,
> And smile at length to see my country bleed:
> From my tame heart the pang of virtue sling,
> And mid the general flame like Nero sing."

And again after an uprising has occurred when a youngster was shot down in the street by the Rapatio's army:

> Hail, halcyon days! When every flying moment,
> Affords new scenes of joy; what tho' the soldier
> True to my purpose hurls promiscuous slaughter;
> He lives and triumphs while the scales of justice,
> Thus by my tools are held
> . . .
> Thus each post is garnish'd with my creatures,

Press, 1974).

12 Metaphor for Governor Francis Bernard, predecessor of Hutchinson.

13 *The Adulateur*, 8.

I'll show my pow'r, and trample on my country.

To which Gripeall, one of his military officers, adds, 'Twas nobly spoke – there breath'd the soul of Caesar.

"What throbs of joy – Nero, I tow'r above thee," Rapatio replies.[14]

The republican rhetoric of growing colonial discontent, which is embraced by such diverse Whigs as John Adams, Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and others, was multifarious and sometimes contradictory, to say nothing of the street theater previously discussed. Two varieties of whiggism are found at various stages of conflation. One variety, associated with the theme of "Commerce and Glory" that was the hallmark of Hanoverian policies as manipulated into and through Parliament by Walpole during the reign of George I, (1714-1727), has been treated in the previous chapter. Another was this one depicted by Mercy Warren. Warren assumed the righteousness of the Puritan cause in establishing a New England beachhead, but excoriated the pretensions of economic empire and championed resistance to unchecked material accumulation as virtue.

Upon closer inspection, Mercy Otis Warren's sense of righteousness is somewhat disingenuous given the background of the Otis family. Mercy's father, Colonel James Otis, had acquired a handsome estate through his contacts in a well-established farming and merchant family. Profiting from the sale of "wools, foodstuffs, fish, pork, lumber, rum, manufactured goods, silks, satins, linen, and ribbons," as well as doing some cobblering on the side, the Colonel and his wife reared their children in bourgeois comfort in Barnstable.[15] Indeed, Colonel Otis had

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14 Ibid., 25.

15 Shaw, *American Patriots*, 81. Shaw discusses at some length the feud between the Otis

acquired his wealth by being a willing agent of the very empire Mercy was now denouncing. According to Mrs. Warren, the virtue of humble austerity was second only to dying in battle in defense of an ambiguous "freedom" which was presumably taken from Native Americans by the Otis's ancestors. The cultural gulf between Europe and the Americas was the original issue between them in the early seventeenth century, and the Puritans had been loathe to let their guard down and accept the indigenous Americans as equals.[16] But others had transcended this prejudice. There are numerous examples of English men and women getting along quite well with indigenous folk, among whom Thomas Morton is probably the best known example.[17] These exceptions to Puritan defensiveness illustrate that a non-combative, non-imperial relationship between Europeans and Amerindians was possible, and that the adversarial relations that *did* develop were not inevitable.

Nevertheless, by the 1770s many New Englanders considered themselves American natives, practicing daily a republican virtue that ran counter to the grasping materialism inherent in the British Empire. Mercy Warren had some things to say about the corruption of this unbridled empire in her own backyard. In her play *The Group*, which appeared in the spring of 1775, she depicts these Yankee perceptions of

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and Hutchinson families in Massachusetts politics and raises the question of how much did this feud contribute to the origins of the rebellion in that colony. See also, John J. Waters, Jr., *The Otis Family: In Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Waters and John A. Schutz, "Patterns of Massachusetts Colonial Politics: The Writs of Assistance and the Rivalry between the Otis and Hutchinson Familes," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 24 (1967): 543-567.

16 Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, reissued with new introduction, New York: Schocken Books, 1990); and Jennings, *Invasion of America*, both expound on this theme.

17 See Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Amsterdam: Iacob Frederick Stam, 1637); for a dated biography of Morton that retains much of the Whig view of history, see Donald F. Connor, *Thomas Morton* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969).

corruption as they manifested in New England Tories who were plotting the demise of the Whig rebels. Printed in both the *Boston Gazette* and *Massachusetts Spy* a month after the Lexington and Concord disturbance, Warren portrayed the "Group" as men who were after the main chance above all else:

> Dick the Publican [to "Collateral"]: You well remember ----- ----- -----
> When station'd there [in town] to gripe the honest trader,
> How much I plunder'd from your native town.
> Under the sanctions of the laws of trade,
> I the hard earnings of industry
> Filch'd from their hands, and built my nest on high.
> And on the spoils I rioted a while,
> But soon the unrighteous pelf slip'd through my hand.
> . . .
> My only game was hither to repair,
> And court the proud oppressors of my Country,
> By the parade of pompous luxury,
> To win their favour, and obtain a place . . .[18]

Here Dick the Publican portrays emblematically how Tory colonists, immoral from the start, turned to the Empire for "favour, and . . . a place," (i.e., a "placeman"). In Massachusetts, Governor Thomas Hutchinson, considered by Whigs to be a "placeman," was the radicals' target. Of the "corrupt" English ministers, it was Lord Bute, the King's tutor and intimate of the Royal Dowager, who bore the brunt of the colonial Whigs' wrathful rhetoric and performances. Indeed, whenever Hutchinson or anyone else was hung in effigy, the presence of a boot hung alongside it signified the presence of Lord Bute in the performance.[19]

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18 Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group*, in Franklin, ed., *Plays and Poems*, 8 (the page numbering in this collection begins anew in each play).

19 The Royal Dowager was the King's mother; see Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, especially the chapter entitled "The 'Scape-Goat.'" For an interesting comparison of Hutchinson with Lord Bute in their roles as scapegoats, see Peter Shaw, *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 48-53.

Considering the contentious history between the Otises and the Hutchinsons – it seems hypocrisy for a member of the Otis family to excoriate those who sought to rise in the political hierarchy of colonial Massachusetts. It makes one question the true motivations of Mercy Warren and her brother James Otis. The ultimate scapegoat here was an arch-enemy of the Otis family – Thomas Hutchinson and a dispute traceable to jealousy over the Otis family's loss of the very "place" Hutchinson obtained.[20] Mercy Otis Warren, who is largely seen as one of the chief heroines of the Revolution, at least in the production of Whig propaganda, appears to have had a conflict of interest and been engaged in a personal mission of revenge – perhaps as much as in a public mission of republican virtue.

The analyses of the cultural history of this period has largely been "trifurcated" along ethnic lines. First, there are ethnographies and ethno-histories of Indigenous Peoples and African Americans. Second, there are histories of "Indian-White" relations and various aspects of slavery – economic, social, and cultural. And thirdly, there are studies of European and Euro-American political economy and society in the New World. Only in the area of textual studies is there any significant hint of embracing the whole ethnic and racial spectrum of interaction and what it might mean for historical analysis.[21] Mercy Otis Warren's New England brand of republicanism and disdain for acquisitiveness seems like the antithesis of "empire and

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20 Shaw provides a useful summary of the origins of this feud and of James Otis's career in *American Patriots*, 77-108.

21 See Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 3-21; Eric Wertheimer, *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

glory" until one brings the indigenous view into the picture. In a continuum of relations between white Europeans and Euro-Americans at one end, and Indigenous Americans and black African and African Americans at the other, Warren clearly comes down on the side of conquest and empire.[22]

Many individuals typically regarded as "native" Americans, (descended from white Europeans), had a vested interest in perpetuating an empire with its headquarters in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Williamsburg, and Charleston instead of London. And while their republican rhetoric against luxury, corruption, and empire served the immediate need of creating a separate identity, it overstated the differences between England and the continental colonies in the end. To the indigenous peoples of North America, the Anglo-American colonists were much more of a threat than the British King-in-Parliament, although both had imperial designs on their territory. As tensions increased and began to turn toward open hostilities between the two imperial forces, British military theater underscored the Whig perception of imperial corruption. This perception of corrupt and decadent British culture had led the Continental Congress to ban theater in 1774; a ban supported even in the South, where the theater had long enjoyed enthusiastic patronage. Indeed, some of the theater's most avid patrons included leaders of the rebellion, even Washington himself.

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22 The latter end of a spectrum would include Thomas Morton types as well as those who "went native." For a sampling of "white Indians," see Drinnon, *Facing West*; Edwin Eastman, *Seven and Nine Years Among the Comanches and Apaches: An Autobiography* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc.); James Axtell, *White Indians of Colonial America* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1979).

General John Burgoyne, commander of an army occupying Boston in 1775 and early 1776, of course ignored the Continental Congress's ban on plays, but he also ignored a 1750 Massachusetts law forbidding plays as well. About two thousand of the approximately six thousand Boston residents were sympathetic to the Tory cause, and participated in the British troops' revels, especially the theater performances organized by Burgoyne and his officers. Plays presented included several from the standard Augustan repertoire, including an adaptation of Aaron Hill's *The Tragedy of Zara* (1735). The performance of this play on December 2, 1775 included a prologue and epilogue written by Burgoyne. In a play that was an adaptation of Voltaire's *Zaïre* and featuring a love affair between a Turkish master and slave, Burgoyne's prologue addressed the Boston rebels. His target was not so much their politics but, like much of the anti-revolution rhetoric, seemed to be addressing an unruly child. Comparing the situation in the colonies to the English Civil War, Lt. Francis Lord Rawdon recited Burgoyne's words:

> In Britain once (it stains th' historic Page)
> Freedom was vital struck by Party Rage.
> Cromwell the Fever watch'd, the knife supplied
> She madden'd by Suicide she died.
> Amidst her groans sunk every liberal art
> Which polish'd life or humaniz'd the heart.
> Then sunk the Stage, quell'd by the Bigot Roar,
> Truth fled with Sense & Shakespear charm'd no more.
> To sooth the Times too much resembling those
> And lull the care tir'd thought, This Stage arose,
> Proud if you hear, Rewarded if you're Pleased
> We come to minister to minds Diseased.23

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23 John Burgoyne, "Prologue for opening the theater at Boston, December 1775," Massachusetts Historical Society, "Object of the Month," March 2004, http://www.masshist.org/objects/2004march.cfm.

Burgoyne draws a parallel here between the play and the death of Caroline society in the dust dry rhetoric of Puritanism – theater had been outlawed by the ascendant Puritan-dominated House of Commons in 1643. Where many New England colonists derided the British culture of empire, here Burgoyne conflates Shakespearean theater with the present performance of Hill's *Zara* by a troupe of British soldiers functioning as an army of occupation. Indeed, the Prologue would seem to indicate that Burgoyne considered this performance at Faneuil Hall by his soldiers to be a pedagogical endeavor. The announcement of the coming lesson continues:

> For you who Guardians of a Nation's cause,
> Unsheathe your Swords to Vindicate the Laws
> The tragic Scene lifts Glory up to View
> And bids heroic Virtue live anew:
> With Ravish'd Ears and Emulative fire
> Rise Britons to th'Examples you Admire;
> Unite the warrior's fame, the Patriots care
> And while you burn to conquer wish to Spare
> The comic muse presides o'er Social Life
> And forms the Parent, husband, friend, and wife
> 'Tis hers the mind from Prejudice to save
> And call Your Old Good Humour from the Grave
> To Pain from Nature, with Touches nice,
> Shew us ourselves and Laugh us out of Vice,
> Say then ye Boston prudes, if Prudes there are
> Is this a Task unworthy of the Fair?
> Shall Form, Decorum, Piety, Refuse
> A Call on Beauty to conduct the Muse?
> And by the Influence of the Young and Chaste
> Diffuse Instruction, Charity and Taste
> Perish the Narrow thought, the Slanderous tongue
> Where the Heart's Right, the Action can't be wrong
> Behold the Test, mark at the Curtain's Rise
> How malice shrinks abash'd from Zara's eyes.[24]

24 Ibid.

In many ways, this is typical of pro-theater rhetoric in the face of religious and/or republican opposition – theater was an agent of instruction. In this case, it was the "Boston Prudes" who need to call their "Old Good Humour from the Grave" so they could, ostensibly, rise to the call of "heroic Virtue," presumably something other than the revolt their civic republican virtue was beckoning forth. Acknowledging that the colonists "burn to conquer," they should also "wish to Spare" – a reference that seems directed at the objects of conquest, the comic muse, or both. "Gentleman Johnny" was an advocate of "Instruction, Charity, and Taste," something he saw the colonists as lacking. This is the same rhetoric found in many manuals on "politeness" circulating in the Empire written to address the social mobility of market society (discussed in the previous chapter). Burgoyne, like many British aristocrats, saw the colonists as children "which I think we have already spoiled by too much indulgence," although he did prefer "to see Americans convinced by persuasion rather than by the sword."[25] This paternal view of the colonists was reflected in depictions of simplistic stage icons with which Gentleman Johnny no doubt would have been familiar. "Fool" icons such as the colonial backwoodsman "Yankee Doodle," the *The Padlock*'s "Mungo," and the simplistic sailor "Jack Tar" were all characters that functioned to rationalize class-related mistreatment and oppression.[26]

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25 John Debrett, *History, Debates, and Proceedings of both Houses of Parliament of Great Britain from the Year 1743 to the Year 1774*, 7 volumes (London, 1792), VI, 79; quoted in George Athan Billias, "John Burgoyne, Ambitious General," in Billias, ed., *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1969), 153.

26 Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 25:3 (July 1968), 371-407.

Jack had been a stock character in English drama at least since Shakespeare, and his various personas varied between the realistic and the comic. His depiction as a misanthrope emerged early on; his hard-edged manners, drinking, and fighting making a convenient foil for the "polite" classes. Such a character is seen in the "polite" theater of the colonies in character of "Captain Cutter, R.N.," in George Colman's *The Jealous Wife*.[27] Captain Cutter, however, while providing a contrast to their lordships in his unpolished manners and Irish brogue, serves the interests of "Lord Trinket," who desires "Harriot," the play's fair maiden. Cutter agrees to impress competing suitors into the navy, removing the obstacles from Trinket's desired ends. While Cutter does follow the orders of Lord Trinket, his presence in the play allows for the vivid expression of aristocratic deceit. When Cutter calls at the residence of Lady Freelove, with Lord Trinket present, Colman presents the following exchange:

> **L. *Freelove*:** O the hideous Fellow! The *Irish* Sailor-Man, for whom I prevailed on your Lordship to get the Post of a Regulating Captain. I suppose He is come to load Me with his odious Thanks. I won't be troubled with Him now.
> **L. *Trinket*:** Let Him in, by all Means. He is the best Creature to laugh at in Nature. He is a perfect Sea-Monster, and always looks and talks as if He was upon Deck. Besides, a Thought strikes me.---He may be of Use.

When m'Lady has the servant send him in, Trinket adds, "*Coup de maitre* 'pon Honour! I intend – but hush! Here the Porpus comes." Trinket and Freelove subsequently address the Captain with great respect, revealing their penchant for crass

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27 Harold Francis Watson, *The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama, 1550-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 138-139. While there is no listing in Johnson and Burling's Calendar, a Captain Manly finally did arrive as a continental officer in Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787), discussed in the next chapter.

deceit. Trinket implies that a deal for their mutual benefit might be struck: if Cutter will send his press gang after Trinket's rival suitors.[28] In a period when republican – and radical democratic – sentiment was growing both at home and in the colonies, this version of Jack Tar plays into the suspicions of commoners for elites. Indeed, Captain Cutter represented one of the most reprehensible figures to colonists as the leader of a press gang, where he acquired the wound on his "starboard eye." First played on the Queen Street Theatre in Charleston in 1764 by the American Company of Players (David Douglass's troupe), *The Jealous Wife* was performed numerous times in 1767, 1768, twice in 1771, and once in 1774 just before plays were banned by the First Continental Congress.[29]

General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne was represented by Whig colonists as a Lord Trinket-like figure – a dandy in a General's uniform; an aristocratic dilettante with militaristic ambitions. With theater outlawed, songs become the best source of public performances from the Continentals' side that exist outside of the theater of war itself. One song directed at Burgoyne and his defeat at Saratoga in October of 1777 captured this caricature of him as a purveyor of corrupt empire. The middle verses take up events as he prepares to leave for Boston:

> To Hampton Court he first repairs,
> To kiss great George's hand, sirs,
> Then to harangue on state affairs,
> Before he left the land, sirs.
> The "lower house" sat mute as mouse
> To hear his grand oration

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28 George Colman, *The Jealous Wife* (London: T. Beckett and Co., 1761), 45-48. The full text is available (with subscription) through "Literature Online," http://lion.chadwyck.com.

29 Johnson and Burling, *Calendar*, 235, 273, 281, 317, 324, 326, 328, 395, 397, 465.

And "all the peers" with loudest cheers
Proclaimed him to the nation.

Then off he went to Canada
Next to Ticonderoga
And quitting those, away he goes
Straightway to Saratoga.
With great parade his march he made
To gain his wished for station
When far and wide his minions hied
To spread his "Proclamation."

To such as staid he offers made
Of "pardon on submission
But savage bands should waste the lands
Of all in opposition."
But ah! The cruel fate of war!
This boasted son of Britain
When mounting his triumphal car
With sudden fear was smitten.

The Sons of Freedom gathered round,
His hostile bands confounded
And when they'd fain have turned their back
They found themselves surrounded!
In vain the fought, in vain they fled
Their chief, humane and tender,
To save the rest, soon thought it best
His forces to surrender . . . [30]

Aspects of the British imperial project that Whig sympathizers would have found objectionable are captured in this song. To be sure, kissing the King's hand and Burgoyne's "grand oration" before Parliament are seen in a patronizing light here. But Burgoyne had lobbied the King for permission to return from America to give a personal report on the state of affairs. Historian George Billias argues that Burgoyne simply wanted to try and influence any decisions about important future appointments

30 Carolyn Robson, *Songs of the American Revolution* (Peak's Island, ME: NEO Press, 1974), 49. Robson believes that this was set to the tune of "The White Cockade," a common continental marching tune to which many lyrics were set. See Robson's note on page 98.

in his favor. One aspect of the situation that the colonists likely did not know was that Burgoyne had requested, after arriving in America in May of 1775, that he be relieved of his military post and be allowed to travel freely in colonies that were not under rebellion in order to sound out possible conciliatory positions. The proposal was rejected, but it does demonstrate that he, like General William Howe, his fellow traveler to the colonies, (along with General Henry Clinton), that a negotiated settlement was preferable to war.

As for the "Proclamation" mentioned in the song, this was a reference to the proclamation he wrote at Camp Bouquet the summer before his defeat at Saratoga. This came two years after a similar one that he had written for General Gage in Boston. Knowing Burgoyne's experience in writing plays, (his *The Maid of the Oaks* was brought out by David Garrick at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane just before he had left for Boston), Gage asked him to write the British government's proclamation declaring their policy in Massachusetts after the Lexington / Concord affair. It was this proclamation that declared martial law in Massachusetts. Using language such as the "infatuated multitude" in reference to the colonists and their "preposterous parade," it had been received with derision from the colonists.[31] Two years later, Burgoyne's Camp Bouquet "Proclamation" brought still more ridicule from the Americans. And while American historians have tended to attack both proclamations as being haughty and condescending, Billias argues that the language was actually quite appropriate given Burgoyne's perceived need for the candor that was due the

31 Billias, "John Burgoyne," 157-158; Edward B. de Fonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes . . . Derived from the Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. John Burgoyne* (London: n.p., 1876), 136; quoted in ibid.

situation. It is helpful to keep in mind that this conflict was, in essence, Englishman against Englishman in the eyes of many of the participants. Indeed, individuals such as General Jeffrey Amherst and Admiral Augustus Keppel had refused commands during the Revolutionary War. General Howe had lost a brother in the French-Indian War, George – the Third Viscount Howe – who was so popular in Massachusetts that the General Council raised a monument to him in Westminster Abbey.[32] Burgoyne was trying to avoid further bloodshed in both proclamations, neither of which was successful. The colonists were particularly annoyed by Burgoyne's reference to the Native Americans under his command:

> I have but to give stretch to the Indian Forces under my direction, and they amount to Thousands, to overtake the harden'd Enemies of Great Britain and America, (I consider them the same) wherever they may lurk.[33]

The colonists responded to Burgoyne's Proclamation in a letter oozing satire but turning serious regarding the Indians:

> To restore the rights of the Constitution, you have called together an amiable host of savages, and turned them loose to scalp our women and children and lay our country waste. This they have performed with their usual skill and clemency, and we remain insensible for the benefit, and unthankful for so much goodness.[34]

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32 Maldwyn A. Jones, "Sir William Howe: Conventional Strategist," in Billias, ed., *George Washington's Opponents*, 44.

33 From James Hadden. *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books: A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, Roy. Art.* Edited by Horatio Rogers. (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1884); available online at http://www.historiclakes.org/explore/proclamation.htm.

34 William Digby, *The British Invasion from the North: The Campaigns of Generals Carleton and Burgoyne from Canada, 1776-1777, with the Journal of William Digby, of the 53d, or Shropshire Regiment of Foot, illustrated with historical notes, by James Phinney Baxter, A.M.* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons), 229-233.

The imperial nature of both sides is revealed in this exchange; the British exerting force over their wayward mercantile subjects; the colonists' sensitivity to the ongoing conflict with the indigenous peoples of North America resulting from their insatiable desire for their lands. While these do not represent a performance *per se*, they are a type of posturing in the public sphere that, particularly coming from actor-playwright-soldier Burgoyne, support the relationship between theater and empire.

Burgoyne's actions during his winter in North America as a secondary commander in Boston further reveal nuances in the British version of the culture of empire. He was not altogether a purveyor of mercantilist empire – his multiple interests can be readily seen in a brief look at his career. Burgoyne was an MP for the Preston borough and his career in Parliament prior to the Revolution was consumed by matters both military and colonial. He was not averse to republican sentiment in regard to what many would consider corruption – in 1772 he introduced a resolution into Parliament to prevent the East India Company from using the British military for its own ends in India. Regarding constitutional matters however, he definitely came down on the side of King-in-Parliament. In his address to Parliament referenced in the above song – an address that made a great impression in that body – Burgoyne declared that "a consideration of the cause [of sovereignty over the colonies] will find its way to the breast of every conscientious man . . . Is there a man in England . . . who does not think the parliamentary rights of Great Britain a cause to fight for, to bleed and die for?"[35]

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35 Billias, "John Burgoyne," 132; *The Parliamentary Register or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons . . . During the Fourteenth* Parliament (London, 1779), I., 232; quoted in Billias, "John Burgoyne," 133.

In the winter of 1776 Boston was a town under siege, with a reduced population (George Washington estimated the number had dwindled from 17,000 to 7000 since Lexington and Concord). That was now smaller than the number of British troops in the town (around 11,000).[36] These troops and the remaining citizens were living on beans and salt pork as they had little access to the surrounding countryside. Initially, General Gage had allowed traffic between city and country, but in May of 1775 he banned all passes as well as "merchandise, provisions, and medicine" from leaving Boston.[37] In this situation, Burgoyne spent most of that year writing letters on his own and Gage's behalf, and making proposals where he subtly criticized Gage for his lack of creative thinking.

Some historians neglect the fact that there was a propaganda war going on between the Continentals and the British and perpetuate a trope assuming British humanitarian shortcomings.[38] Cultural historians Jared Brown and Kenneth Silverman have both fallen into this trap. Brown depicts Burgoyne in a somewhat sneering manner, questioning, without evidence, whether the purported beneficiaries of Burgoyne's theatrical endeavors – widows and orphans – ever saw any of the proceeds. Silverman calls Burgoyne "insolent" in his "remaking of a Boston radical meeting-hall into a military playhouse," and his rejection of the Massachusetts ban on theater. Theater interdictions in Boston had been overturned and/or ignored by the British (and by some Bostonians) for nearly thirty years at this point. It was a war, I

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36 Silverman, *Cultural History*, 291.

37 Arthur Gilman, ed., *Theatrum Majorum . . . with Which is Incorporated Extracts from the Diary of Dorothy Dudley* (Cambridge: Lockwood, Brooks and Company, 1876), 23; hereafter *Dudley Diary*.

38 Brown, 22-27; Silverman, *Cultural History*, 292.

would point out; of course Burgoyne would act against the interests of the Continentals. On the other hand, British historian Billias notes, regarding the prologue analyzed above, that Burgoyne "called upon the conquering British to be merciful and the rebellious Americans to return to the fold." Billias glosses over the fact that the prologue *was* condescending, as were all of the proclamations issued by British commanders. Between these two positions is the acknowledgement that this was a "civil war" between two forces within an existing empire. The object of the empire was control of land, resources, markets, and political sovereignty. A war of words as well as one of military force was well underway.

So Burgoyne, brushing aside Massachusetts law, (not considered valid *vis-à-vis* King-in-Parliament anyway), against the "shewing of plays" and, in addition to *Zara*, *Tamerlane*, and *The Busybody*, produced a farce – *The Blockade of Boston* – written by himself. *Blockade*, now lost, reportedly lampooned the Whig cause and caricatured General Washington, who was represented as a buffoon. As Dorothy Dudley reported, "How our Boston buildings are desecrated by the British soldiers! Faneuil Hall, which has rung with the elegance of patriots, is used as a theatre, where ridiculous plays are performed and our army and its commanders turned into sport." Dudley goes on to say that Washington was represented as "an uncouth countryman, dressed shabbily, with large whig [sic] and long, rusty sword."[39] The performance of this play had been known two weeks in advance when the pro-Whig *New England Chronicle* announced that:

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39 *Dudley Diary*, 53.

> We are informed that there is now getting up at the Theatre, and will be performed in the course of a Fortnight, a new Farce, called the Blockade of Boston. (*It is more probably, before that time, the poor wretches will be presented with a* Tragedy, *called the* BOMBARDMENT of Boston.)[40]

This allowed the Continentals to plan an attack on Charlestown, near Boston, that would coincide with the play's presentation. Their intent was to burn the abandoned houses that the British were using for fuel. The presentation of *The Blockade of Boston* went forward, and in the midst of a scene, according to Dudley, a sergeant ran onto the stage shouting, "The Yankees are attacking our works on Bunker Hill!" Some thought it was part of the play until the players themselves began to remove their costumes and prepare for battle. Approximately one hundred American soldiers were raiding Charlestown, burning houses and taking prisoners. According to Dudley only one Englishman was killed and there were no American casualties.[41] Here was a case of the theaters of war and the stage colliding: the culture of empire meets the battle for empire, albeit couched as a battle for sovereignty.

It is no small irony then that Dorothy Dudley's next entry, for January 22, would make mention of a visit by the "Caghnawaga tribe" [sic] to General Washington's camp near Boston. She describes how they were lavished with gifts and shown around to the various military positions. Dudley herself, who met them at a dinner party in their honor, was impressed with their courtesy and sense of formality, "in their Indian fashion." These Indians were the descendants of those

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40 *New England Chronicle; or, the Essex Gazette*, Dec. 21-28, 1775 issue; quoted in Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27. For more on Burgoyne, the theater, and Bunker Hill, see Brown, 23-29; also George O. Seilheimer, *History of the American Theatre: During the Revolution and After*, Three Volumes (Philadelphia: Globe Printing House, 1889), II:21.

41 Silverman summarizes the known print accounts in *Cultural History*, 293; *Dudley Diary*, 53; see also Brown, *Theater in America*, 26-29.

"converted" by French Jesuits in the seventeenth century. Eventually known as the Caughnawaga Mohawks or French Mohawks, they were not merely converted, but removed onto reservations to prevent "recidivism," or the recanting of their Christianity. Part of the Iroquois Confederacy, mostly Mohawk, the Caughnawaga had occupied the head of the Mahican Channel (i.e., the Hudson Valley, Lake Champlain, and the Richelieu Valley to Montreal), making their friendship a boon to those wishing to travel this perilous route. Indeed, Caughnawaga Mohawks near Montreal and the traditional Mohawks near Albany had long facilitated trade between British New York and French Canada.[42] As middle-men that essentially served as porters in the smuggling trade between the English and French empires they, and other Iroquois, allied with the English Whig imperialists' renewed effort to extend their interests to the West. As this trade and expansion continued through the eighteenth century, the Caughnawagas' and Whig expansionists' interests increasingly coincided, making them, by the mid 1770s, natural allies of the colonial rebels – both were engaged in usurping empire from London.[43] The point here is to show how this expansionist empire brought peoples and individuals under its sway – not only European colonists, but indigenous peoples as well. The reasons for the presence of the Caughnawaga delegates in Boston in 1776 were deeply rooted in the imperial dynamics of North America, as are Dorothy Dudley's (and Mercy Warren's and others') references to "British tyranny."[44] Also, I will show below that this was

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42 Francis Jenning, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of AIndian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: Norton, 1984), 176.

43 Ibid., 284-85, 298, 353.

44 Interaction between the circus, the theater, and the Canadian faction of this Indian group is

considered the only acceptable position for indigenous peoples to take *vis-à-vis* the economic empire, any other position made them vulnerable to attempts to exterminate or remove them.

Responding to *The Blockade of Boston*, Mercy Otis Warren purportedly (there is some disagreement about authorship), wrote another play for the closet called *The Blockheads: or, the Affrighted Officers*.[45] The target of the author's acerbic pen in this case was the so-called "politeness" aspect of British imperial culture as analyzed in the previous chapter. Burgoyne, called by Philip Freneau a "scribbling fop," was General Gage's second in command at Boston whose reputation embodied the effeminate, "polite," aristocratic representative of corruption that continental rebels saw in the British occupiers.[46] The characters in *The Blockheads* are British soldiers and Tories trapped in Boston during the above-noted siege. The character "Simple," said to represent Josiah Edson, (a noted Boston Tory who had been driven from his home by a mob and was lodged in Boston with the British troops for protection), bemoans their plight. They have no one to blame but themselves, he wails, as they had pursued "these gewgaw commissions," finding themselves now among these wretches "grinning horribly their ghastly smiles." If only they had minded the

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treated in the next chapter.

45 For debate on the authorship of this and other plays attributed to Warren, see Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995), 70, 175; and "Blockheadism and the Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution," in *Early American Literature* 7 (Fall 1972), 148-62. Zagarri argues that Warren did not write *The Blockheads*. Jeffrey H. Richards acknowledges that there is uncertainty about the origins of this play as well as *Sans Souci* and *The Motley Assembly* in *MOW*, 84, 102-04.

46 Freneau quoted in Silverman, *Cultural History*, 292.

concerns of their farms, he adds, a point that Mercy Warren certainly would have supported even if she did not write it.[47]

The author also had some things to say about "corrupt" females. Act II opens on a conversation between Tabitha, Simple's daughter and target of Lord Dapper's affections, and her friend Dorsa. The shallowness of her affections for Dapper is quickly revealed when questions arise over his "ability" to satisfy her nuptial desires:

> **Tabitha:** [Regarding her intent to marry Dapper], Why should I deny myself the pleasures and honores of this life, to please an *old fool* [her father who is opposed to her marriage and departure for England] that is just leaving of them. The title of *lady* is very agreeable; it is what many would jump at; -- such matches do not offer every day, and I shall improve the time as dextrous as I can.
> **Dorsa:** Make hay while the sun shines, is a very good maxim. Indeed, madam, I approve your determination; I should think you quite mad to determine otherways – who would not have a young spark if they could meet with one? For my own part I would not lodge another night without one, if I meet with a good offer.
> **Tabitha:** All our correspondence must go thro' your hands, you must be cautious, and watchful, for the least mishap will disconcert the whole plan.
> **Dorsa:** I am us'd to these thricks [sic] of gallantry; I have introduc'd many a young sweet-heart – you may safely trust your security in my hands. But one thing I wou'd mention (excuse my boldness) this L—d *Dapper* labours under the disgrace of *Inability*.
> **Tabitha:** *Inability*, what do you mean? I hope he is not wanting in *any thing* to render the marriage state agreeable – if he is, shall quickly throw him out of window, and appoint a better person in his room – its true, since you hint this, it makes me somewhat suspicious, he looks like a *baboon* upon stilts, and I begin to be fearful of his abilities – however, he will serve for a *cully* to fleece for my indulgencies in *dress and fashion*.[48]

This is unambiguous satirical commentary on British notions of politeness – notions, one should remember, that were shared by much of the continental leadership,

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47 Mercy Otis Warren(?), *The Blockheads: or, the Affrighted Officers. A Farce* (Boston: in Queen Street, 1776), 6; in *The Plays and Poems of Mercy Otis Warren*, Benjamin Franklin V, ed. (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1980).

48 *The Blockheads*, 8-9.

especially in the South. While there was a common enemy, there was some unity between those who viewed wealth, fashion, pretension; i.e., "politeness," as corrupt and those who saw it as desirable. Propaganda such as the *The Blockheads* was written to target the British, but the colonists *were* largely British in language, culture, and in the desire for economic growth and expansion.[49] This is war propaganda to be sure, but the critique is very much within an Anglo cultural paradigm and empire is still the meta-narrative beneath the surface. "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne might be a convenient target for the Anglo-Americans' anger, but there were more similarities than differences between Burgoyne and the colonial elite.

General William Howe, who had arrived in America with Burgoyne and General Henry Clinton, was another fan of the theater in command of troops during the American Revolution. After stationing in Boston and then Halifax, (searching, he would later argue, for an angle of attack on the continental troops), Howe arrived in New York in September of 1776. That winter, Howe and his fellow military Thespians occupied the John Street Theatre, one of the theater facilities constructed by David Douglass's American Company in 1767. He and his officer corps became so associated with the theater that one Captain Thomas Stanley, (of Burgoyne's theater exploits in Boston), referred to them as "Howe's strolling company" in the *Royal American Gazette*.[50] As with Boston, the British occupation of New York tended to drive out Whigs and draw in Tories or, in some cases, individuals simply

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49 The French-Indian populations of Canada, the Dutch in Albany and the upper Hudson, and the Germans of the Pennsylvania back-country were the primary non-English immigrant groups during this period. I treat their cultural distinctiveness, to some extent, in the next chapter.

50 Quoted in Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution*, 31.

changed stripes. This was illustrated by one of two journalists who helped Howe generate interest in his officers' performances: Hugh Gaine, a friend of the American Company and a Whig before the arrival of Howe. The other was James Rivington, a noted Tory and publisher of *Rivington's Gazette*. Like many in these troubled times Gaine put business before political loyalties and, in 1776, the need arose for him to display Tory sympathies, which he did. Both of these papers provided notice and reviews of theater happenings in British-occupied New York. Apparently the Americans later forgave Gaine – he continued as publisher of the *New York Gazette: and the Weekly Mercury* after the war.[51] Gaine is one illustration of the civil nature of this conflict and underscores the fact that middle and upper-middle classes Americans were not very different from their English cousins other than being closer to the expanding edge of the Empire.

However, on a more radical level, striking differences emerged. To point out this contrast, it is useful to examine one of the first plays that British troops performed after their occupation of New York. Gaine's *Mercury* announced the restoration of the John Street Theater and called for "Gentlemen of the Navy and Army, whose Talents and Inclinations induce them to assist in so laudable an Undertaking," to send their names into the paper by the following evening.[52] About three weeks later, on January 25, the subsequent "troupe" performed Henry Fielding's satirical *Tragedy of Tragedies, or, the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731). While this performance has been documented, historians have not

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51 Ibid., 31-32.

52 Gaine's *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, 6 January, 1777.

commented on the choice of *Tom Thumb* to open the theatrical occupation of New York by an imperial army. The play is a satire on the worshipful fawning that King Arthur and his subjects bestow on this miniature war-hero. Tom Thumb's conception was reportedly a contrivance of Merlin the Magician at the request of the childless couple Goody and Gaffer Thumb. While I have not yet discovered hard evidence to support the claim, it seems quite plausible that the play was chosen because of the parallels between Walpole's corrupt Parliament, the original target of the play's satire, and the colonies' rebelliousness. Tom Thumb could represent George Washington – generally seen by the British as an upstart not worthy of serious consideration as a military leader. Or he could represent the colonies themselves – a collection of farmers and planters, slaves and artisans who thought they can rise up against the might of the British Empire. In January of 1777, a propaganda war had been in full flower in the colonies for several years, and it is unlikely that the first play to appear in British-occupied New York, presented as it was by military officers, would be chosen irrespective of ongoing rhetorical exchanges with the rebels. First performed over forty years earlier, Fielding was known for his satire directed at the Robert Walpole regime. Indeed, his *Vision of the Golden Rump* had been influential in spurring the Walpolean Parliament to pass the Licensing Act of 1737 that restricted theatrical freedom in England. *Tom Thumb* seems to have been a satire directed at Walpole's corrupt Whig Party and his pretensions as a "great man" in Parliament. Thus the potential parallel with what Howe and the British officers would have perceived as the Washington-led colonials' hubris is too striking to ignore.

The character Thumb, presented as a returning war hero who saved the realm against the "Giants," is in love with Princess Huncamunca, daughter of Arthur and Queen Dollallolla ("Oh, for a one-syllable name," bemoans the King). Thumb is opposed by Grizzle, who designs to kill him for his own desire for the Princess. Thumb's defense of the lowly and down-trodden is apparent when the Bailiff and "Follower" try to arrest his friend Noodle regarding a complaint from his tailor. "Ha, Dogs! Arrest my friend before my face?" Thumb cries, as he slays them both. After they are both dead, Thumb declares:

> Thus perish all the Bailiffs in the Land,
> Till Debtors at Noon-Day shall walk the Streets,
> And no one fear a Bailiff or his Writ.[53]

Such a political stand would have equated Tom Thumb with the "democratical" constituents in both England and the colonies, the latter being the opponents in the present engagement of 1777.[54] The association of such sentiments with the monarch would have been seen as a historicized Walpole and King George I. In the end, Tom Thumb's hubris is rewarded in a triumphal procession when he is eaten by a cow. Disputes in the court lead to the violent deaths of the entire cast, thus divining the fate of both the Walpolean speculations of the 1720s and, from the view of "Howe's Strolling Players," the colonial rebellion of the 1770s.

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53 Henry Fielding, *Tragedy of Tragedies*, Act II, Scene 2; "Literature Online" database (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994), www.lion.chadwyck.com; from the original *The Tragedy Of Tragedies; Or The Life and Death Of Tom Thumb the Great. As it is Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market* (London: J. Roberts, 1731), 21.

54 Fielding himself was a Tory, and would have considered such developments as products of Whig corruption. After the opening night, *Tom Thumb* was repeated the following Thursday, January 30, but after that the theatrical choices of Howe and his officers seems to have followed the stock Augustan plays of the day. For a listing of known theatrical presentations during the Revolutionary War, see the "Appendix" in Brown, *Theatre in America during the Revolution*, 173-187.

Stock plays that had been hits in Drury Lane were naturally the most selected for performance by the British officer-actor troupe. Aside from Shakespeare, plays such as *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *The Fair Penitent*, *Venice Preserv'd*, and the inspirational plays of militaristic loyalty and heroism like *Douglas* (which opened the second season in occupied New York), and *Gustavas Vasa* (both discussed in the previous chapter), made up the bulk of the repertoire. This was true not only in Howe's and Cornwallis's New York, but in British theater throughout the colonies. Of course, Douglass and the American Company continued with this same basic repertoire in the Caribbean during the war. But notably missing from the British military stage was Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy*, the favorite play of the Continentals' military leader Washington, which depicted resistance to Caesar's imperial expansion of power at the expense of the Roman Senate. Washington did not overlook this play, as will be seen below.

One play that was part of this repertoire and opened occupied-New York's third theater season echoed *Tom Thumb* in both its origins and historicized allusions. Henry Carey's *Chrononhotonthologos: The Most Tragical Tragedy That Ever Was Tragedized by any Company of Tragedians* (1734) was another satire from the Walpolean era that still had allegorical value in the colonial uprising. This play was originally designed to satirize the support Queen Caroline, wife of George II, gave to Robert Walpole over the objections of the King. The Tory Party under George I had yielded to the machinations of Walpole and liberal interests in Parliament for fear of Jacobitism and opposition to the Hanoverian succession. The Prince of Wales (future George II) opposed this policy and planned to reverse it. But upon his succession,

Queen Caroline (Caroline of Ansbach) had sufficient political clout to maintain support for Walpole.[55]

The play itself would have been well-understood by anyone seeing it in the 1730s, hence its influence, along with *Tom Thumb*, on the Walpolean decision to push through Parliament the *Licensing Act*, requiring plays to undergo a censorship process. The Tory message embedded in *Chrononhotonthologos* was that the Whig Party, along with opera, pantomime, and other large scale theatrical productions, was inherently a product of the mob and hopelessly corrupt.[56] Much of the verse is nonsensical, but one can capture the satire on "entertainments for the mob" in passages such as the following one. Here, the King is frustrated by his inability to sleep soundly and, cursing "Somnus," bellows:

> Henceforth let no man sleep, on pain of death;
> Instead of sleep, let pompous pageantry
> Keep all mankind eternally awake.
> Bid Harlequino decorate the stage
> With all magnificence of decoration;
> Giants and giantesses, dwarfs and pigmies,
> Songs, dances, music in its amplest order,
> Mimes, pantomimes, and all the magic motion
> Of scene deceptiovisive and sublime.[57]

No sooner is the King seated to enjoy this pantomime, but the Captain of the Guard announces an attack by the army of the Antipodes, the mythical realm of the pre-Columbian European imagination beyond the "torrid zone." They walk on their

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55 For Walpolean politics, see Jeremy Black, *Robert Walpole and the Nature of Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

56 Simon Tussler, "Introduction," in Tussler, ed., *Burlesque Plays of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford Paperbacks, 1969). The play can be found in this anthology as well, 209-234.

57 Henry Carey, *Chrononhotonthologos*, "A New Edition," (London: Barker and Son, 1734), 8.

hands, their heads in their stomachs, and form vertical columns rather than horizontal ranks. The general of the Antipodean army is taken captive, and the Queen falls in love with him. Pantomime, early melodrama, and the circus were much more prevalent in the 1770s than they had been in the 1730s, so this brand of satire would have retained, if not gained, relevance for critics of the overly-"democratical" entertainments of the "mob." Tory satires such as these, coupled with the standard canon of English theater in this period, underscore the association of empire and theater on the British side of the war. But, as this study continues to show, performances reflected the imperial designs of both sides in this war.

It is not a coincidence that while the Continentals were rejecting the British Empire, they were also – *almost* – rejecting its theater. The exceptions to this rejection were rare, but underscore the association of the continental elite with the culture of empire. The presentation of at least two plays, one of which was Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy*, was ordered by Washington at Valley Forge in the spring of 1778 after the dismal winter the troops had spent there. George Ewing, whose journal recorded the event of the first play (which he does not name), wrote that although he had a ticket he was unable to get inside the "Bake House," where the play was performed, because of the crowd. He and his fellow junior officers repaired to "Major Parker's hut," where a fine "frolic" was had by all regardless of missing the show.[58] Other plays planned for the Bake House at Valley Forge were *The Padlock*, *The Recruiting Officer*, and *The Fair Penitent*, the former and latter of which were

58 George Ewing, *The Military Journal of George Ewing*, available with information about Ewing at the family website, http://www.sandcastles.net/george.htm. See also Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 37; and Brown, 57-59.

analyzed above in the context of empire and were stock plays of the day.[59] So although the Continental Congress had banned plays, the troops occasionally hedged on the ban and when they did so presented stock plays of the British Empire.[60]

The performances at Valley Forge were in part a response to British festivities in Philadelphia, which were no secret to the Continentals. General William Howe's occupation of Philadelphia was characterized by an attempt to recreate London's festive air in a town built up by Quaker colonists. There was a respectable number of Tory sympathizers, however – enough to make the dinners, balls, and theater events well-attended.[61] One Becky Franks told her friend Nancy Paca, wife of Maryland Continental Congress delegate William Paca, that the British had quite enlivened the town. While the custom in Philadelphia society was to attend a ball in couples, regardless of marital status, the British custom was for women to "play the field," and mingle with numerous partners. Franks wrote:

> I spent Tuesday evening at Sir Wm. Howe's, where we had a concert and dance. No loss for partners, even I am engaged to seven different gentlemen, for you must know 'tis a fix'd rule never to dance but two dances at a time with the same person.[62]

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59 Quoted in Pollock, 37; and Brown, 59.

60 Brown notes a smattering of plays in New York, Philadelphia, and New Hampshire performed by the continental officers before Yorktown. See Brown, 174-175.

61 Summaries can be found in Silverman, *Cultural History*, 333-337, and Robert McConnell Hatch, *Major John André: A Gallant in Spy's Clothing*, 87-108. For a broader view of the Philadelphia occupation, see John W. Jackson, *With the British Army in Philadelphia 1777-1778* (San Rafael, CA and London: Presidio Press, 1979).

62 Becky Franks' letters are published in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XVI (1892), 216-218.

Obviously, she was a member of that portion of colonial society that was deeply engaged in the culture of empire – in this case the British version of "politeness" and ambition that were prerequisites to acceptance into the imperial elite.

The most grand of the performances in occupied Philadelphia stands above the stock plays of the day and deserves mention as a striking example of the culture of empire; indeed, it harkens back to the days of divine-right monarchy. The penchant for extravagant performances of General Howe and his officer corps found a culmination in the so-called "Mischianza" (sometimes spelled "Mescheanza"), orchestrated in April of 1778 – about the same time of the activities at the Valley Forge "Bake House." This was billed as a celebration of Howe's departure from North America following his resignation as commander of British forces in the colonies. But in order to appreciate the significance of the Mischianza, one needs to briefly summarize Howe's career in North America.

Howe had distinguished himself under General Wolf's command in the French-Indian War. It was Howe's troops who successfully scaled the cliffs below Quebec City in the dark and enabled the defeat of the French on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 – a battle that ultimately resulted in the French departure from mainland North America. Military successes at Louisburg, Montreal, and Havana during that war of empires further added to his growing stature as a leader of troops. He introduced new light infantry tactics and training that allowed large numbers of men to move rapidly and stealthily, influencing in the long term the way war would be conducted in the British Empire and beyond. In addition to these military distinctions, Howe served in Parliament along with numerous army officers,

including Generals Burgoyne and Cornwallis. He represented the town of Nottingham in the House of Commons, having been elected to replace his brother George who was killed at the battle of Ticonderoga in 1758. The death of his brother in that battle could be one reason why Howe did not act more aggressively in his later campaigns against the American army. Historians largely believe, as did many members of Parliament as well as colonial loyalists, that Howe had pulled some punches in 1776-77. George Howe had been very popular among the colonials during the French-Indian War, being one of the few British officers who would have direct dealings with them. William and a third brother, Lord Richard Howe, the commander of British naval forces in the Revolutionary War, appreciated that gesture.

Howe went on to command the occupying forces of New York in 1776. After driving Washington's army from Long Island in 1776, Howe had moved his army from New York to the head of Delaware Bay in May of 1777 and on to Philadelphia. During this period, although he did defeat Washington at the Battle of Brooklyn, at the Brandywine, and minimized his losses in other continental "victories," Howe reportedly could have destroyed Washington's army on a number of occasions, including while he was in Philadelphia, but simply decided not to pursue the Continentals electing, he argued, not to make his forces overly vulnerable. Having fought his way into Philadelphia in the summer of 1777, the bourgeois culture of Philadelphia welcomed Howe and the theater flourished during his stay. This focus on Philadelphia, many historians argue, cost Burgoyne the Battle of Saratoga that fall. Burgoyne had thought Howe was part of his offensive in the north. Lord George

Germain, First Viscount Sackville, the overall commander of British forces in the New World, apparently had allowed the two generals to pursue separate engagements without one knowing what the other was doing.[63] He made the same mistake at Yorktown with Generals Clinton and Cornwallis.[64]

A cloud hung over Howe's command by the spring of 1778. The extravagance of the Mischianza was a reflection of the negative circumstances under which Howe was to depart for London on May 24, six days after the event. Indeed, Major John André, probably the primary planner and organizer of the Mischianza, sent a letter on the ship that bore Howe back to England describing the event and the gloom that hung over his command: "[N]ot even the pleasure of conversing with my friend," he wrote, "can secure me from the general dejection I see around me, or remove the share I must take in the universal regret and disappointment which his approaching departure hath spread throughout the whole army."[65] Twenty-two field officers contributed £140 apiece to a pre-arranged plan, with preparations managed by a committee of four officers. Following examples of specific festivals held by and for the royal courts of England and France, the affair began with a fleet bearing the British generals, including Lord Admiral Howe, brother of Sir William and commander of the Royal Navy in the New World. Three galleys bore the Howes, Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Charles Cornwallis, respectively. The galleys had on each

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63 For Howe's career in North America, see Maldwyn Jones, "Sir William Howe: Conventional Strategist," in Billias, ed., *George Washington's Opponents*, 39-72.

64 For a biography of Germain, see Alan Valentine, *Lord George Germain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

65 Major John André, "Particulars of the Mischianza in America," *Gentleman's Magazine* 48 (1778), 355.

quarter five flat boats festooned with green cloth and bearing "ladies and gentlemen" invited to the event. The fleet was led by three flat boats with a military band in each. Six barges surrounded the whole to keep onlookers, of which there were many, at bay. Men-of-War, transport ships, and other merchant vessels docked nearby flew a full display of their flags in honor of the occasion. A coordinated landing was disrupted by the flood-tide which forced the slower barges back in the procession. The landing was by the "Old Fort" at the south end of the town, with festivities to recommence at the residence of the late Joseph Wharton, which overlooked the river from a gentle slope about four hundred yards away. When the Howe's galley landed, the nearby *HMS Roebuck* fired a seventeen-gun salute, soon followed by the same from the *HMS Vigilant*. On the lane leading to the Wharton house, two files each of grenadiers and light horse lined the way to a field one hundred and fifty yards square surrounded by troops in formation. The whole was arrayed in the tradition of a "tilt and tournament, according to the customs of ancient chivalry."66

The company passed through two triumphal arches, elaborately decorated – one for Sir William and one for Lord Howe. Two pavilions with risers surrounded the tournament field and soon filled with the invited spectators. At a trumpet signal, six knights on grey horses, attended by their esquires and clad in red and white silks, entered the field. Four trumpeters and a herald led the group, on the herald's tunic was their insignia – two roses entwined – with the motto, "We Droop When Separated." Lord Cathcart was the chief of these "Knights of the Blended Rose" and was accompanied by two young black slaves wearing blue and white silk sashes and

66 Ibid., 355-56.

drawers, with silver clasps on their necks and arms, holding Cathcart's stirrups.[67] Two officers walked alongside, one bearing his lance and the other his shield. His personal "device" depicted on a standard was Cupid riding on a horse with the motto, "Surmounted by Love." Each subsequent knight entered the field, each with similar array – esquires, "devices" with mottos, and each bore a colored ribbon that corresponded to a ribbon borne by one of the maidens on the sidelines. André names and describes each knight's livery in his account.

When these knights had circled the ring, the herald announced the knights' challenge:

> The Knights of the Blended Rose, by me their Herald, proclaim and assert that the Ladies of the Blended Rose excel in wit, beauty, and every accomplishment, those of the *whole World*; and, though any Knight or Knights be so hardy as to dispute or deny it, they are ready to enter the lists with them, and maintain their assertions by deeds of arms, according to the laws of ancient chivalry.

With that, a "Black Herald" entered the field, ordered his trumpets to sound, and six more knights entered with the same pomp and ceremony as the previous company. These "Knights of the Burning Mountain," clad in black and orange livery, each with an insignia and colored ribbons that corresponded to another set of young ladies on the sidelines, accepted the challenge of a tournament displaying "deeds of arms." A

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67 Ibid., 356. William Shaw Cathcart, son of the 9th Baron Cathcart of the Scottish peerage, eventually became the aide-de-camp of Sir Henry Clinton. His American wife was Elizabeth Elliot (daughter of Andrew Elliot, a rich and influential Tory), who eventually became a lady-in-waiting of Queen Charlotte after the war. See Robert D. Bass, *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarlton and Mary Robinson* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947); and Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, ed., *The Dictionary of National Biography,* 22 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1882), 3:1196-97.

tournament then ensued, with the "knights" play-acting jousting and fencing skills for the enjoyment of the assembled spectators.

This captures in abbreviated form the elaborate nature of this event, likely the most elaborate celebration in the history of colonial British North America to this point. In the end, the ladies under dispute stepped in and announced that they could not bear to witness the shedding of their knights' blood, that knights and ladies of both sides were equally virtuous and that the tournament be ended and the revelry begin. The festival at that point transformed into a feast, then a formal ball, and subsequently a drinking bout that lasted all night. In sum, because Sir William was leaving the colonies to face a questioning Parliament under color of shame, and his officers wanted to leave him with an honor befitting their esteem for him, they organized this extravaganza to mitigate the affects of Howe's being "called on the carpet."[68] The Mischianza is a reminder of the wealth and luxury that was, for an imperial elite, an expectation – a norm to be maintained by public policy and by access to the public trough that enabled such wealth to be spent in a ritual emphasizing the perceived glories of those at the top of this culture of empire. For the trappings alone, Howe's officers spent over £3000.

This did not set well with the Quaker population who, at least officially, remained neutral. The Quakers' history at this point had been one of a people who had attempted to deal with the Native Americans on a relatively peaceful footing. This attempt at peaceful relations had long been compromised by Indian-hating

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68 For a more complete account of the festivities see Brown, 51-56. Another recounting of the event with links to further information can be accessed at http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/banecdotes/80mischianza.html#f17.

expansionists ranging from the Paxton Boys to the smallpox blankets of General Amherst. Unlike the majority of Puritans, the Quakers under William Penn had been insistent on making honest land deals with the Indians. The theatrical events in Philadelphia represented to the Quakers the kind of imperial culture they saw as corrupt. Quaker diarist Elizabeth Drinker's commentary on the Mischianza festival put on for the benefit of the Howe brothers is unambiguous:

> May 18, 1778: "this day may be remembered by many, from the Scenes of Folly and Vanity, promoted by the Officers of the Army under pretence of shewing respect to Gen. Howe, now about leaving them – the parade of Coaches and other Carriages with many Horsemen, thro' the Streets towards the No. Liberties, were great numbers of the Officers and some Women embark'd in three Galleys, and a number of boats, and pass'd down the River, befoe the City, with Colours display'd, a large Band of Music, and the Ships in the Harbour decorated with Colours, saluted by the Cannon of some of them; it is said they landed in south wark, and proceeded from the waterside to Joseph Whartons late dwelling, which has been decorated and fitted for this occasion – in an expensive way, for this Company to Feast, Dance, and Revel in, -- on the River Sky-Rockets and other Fire Works, were exhibited after Night. – How insensible do these people appear, while our Land is so greatly desolated, and Death and sore destruction has overtaken and impends over so many."[69]

Unlike the Congregationalists exemplified by Mercy Otis Warren, Quakers had maintained a relatively anti-imperial stance throughout their stay in North America. Indeed, during the French-Indian War, Indians raiding British outposts in Pennsylvania spared the Quakers their wrath – the Quakers had always treated them kindly. The attendees of the Friends' Yearly Meeting for Pennsylvania and New Jersey at Burlington in West New Jersey officially expressed gratitude "for the

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69 *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, 2 volumes, Elaine Forman Crane, ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), I: 306.

peculiar favour extended and continued to our Friends and Brethren in profession, none of whom have we have yet heard been Slain nor carried into Captivity."[70]

The Quakers had stayed out of the wars of empire in the New World since King Williams' War began in the 1690s. Their peaceful relations with the Indians was compromised however when the Scots, Scots-Irish, and Germans began to immigrate into Pennsylvania. Ironically, it was the Quakers' pacifism that had attracted them in the first place in the hope they would find refuge from these same imperial wars.[71] But the treaties between William Penn and the Delaware people nevertheless brought amicability between colonials and indigenes into public consciousness. This would prove influential when the colonials began searching for an indigenous cultural self-identification.

As for the Quakers and the empire in Philadelphia, the departure of the British in 1778 did not translate into a departure of an imperial culture. In July, a month after the Continental Army had re-occupied the city, Mary (White) Morris, wife of the financier Robert Morris, wrote to her mother regarding conditions in the town:

> I know of no news, unless to tell you that we are very gay as such. We have a great many balls and entertainments, and soon the Assemblys will begin. Tell Mr. Hall even our military gentlemen here are too liberal to make any distinctions between Whig and Tory ladyes – if they make any, it's in favor of

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70 Minutes of Society of Friends Yearly Meeting, 1758; quoted in Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1976; orig. pub. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, 1975), 165.

71 Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Era of the American Revolution*, abridged edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 43, 66. See also Wayland F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); R.J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 1718-1775* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1988).

> the latter, such, strange as it may seem, is the way things are conducted at present in this city.[72]

Although some Whigs were still bitter about the Tory hospitality to the British as exemplified by the Mischianza, apparently the Whig officers and Tory "belles" danced together even at the first ball given at the City Tavern after the British occupation.[73]

In the South, after the devastating conquest of Charleston by the British army, General Henry Clinton's forces of occupation held concerts and balls during the theater season of early 1781. Amateur plays were apparently staged, and there were rumors of the return of the Lewis Hallam troupe – the American Company of Comedians – the following winter.[74] Hallam's return, seemingly, was dependent on an overall British victory in the colonies since even South Carolina, like the northern colonies and Continental Congress, had quashed the staging of plays since the 1773 Tea Act and subsequent unrest.[75] Of course, that victory did not occur, yet Hallam did return with his company after the war. It would become known as the "Old American Company," and they would pursue a successful staging a new kind of imperial culture well into the nineteenth century, as discussed in later chapters.

The theater of the American Revolution, split along fault lines between stage, street, and closet, reveals the struggle between imperial forces over issues of economic and political control of this portion of the British Empire. The narrow

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72 Charles Henry Hart, "Mary White – Mrs. Robert Morris," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, II:1 (1878), 162-163.

73 John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, 3 volumes (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Co., 1884), II: 898-899.

74 Silverman, *Cultural History*, 406.

75 Ibid., 251-252.

cultural foci in the historiography of this area of study have minimized the imperial nature of the "Glorious Cause."[76] Without the perspective of empire to clear the air of nationalistic constructions, this history remains obscured. Even many opponents of the empire's theater often spoke reverently of the blood that had been spilled to pave the way for English colonization. Such rhetoric would only increase as ethnic cleansing of the "frontier" expanded after the Revolution. In a still more raw expression of empire, street theater excoriated the "placemen" of empire while sometimes advocating attacks on indigenous Americans battling against the expansion many rebels felt was their due. The inclusion of indigenous and African presence into the framework of historical discourse reveals the imperial nature of most Anglo-American forms of performance. This broader spectrum removes the pedestal upon which Euro-American revolutionaries have been placed, and reveals a more realistic picture of events. Euro-American performances provide a lens for this view and, as the superficial "politeness" of bourgeois theater is stripped away, the visceral nature of this proto-Manifest Destiny is revealed.

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76 A reference to a line in Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau's commencement poem cited above, page 89. Also used by Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Chapter Four
Beyond Nationalism: Performance and Democratizing Empire in the Federalist Period

The return of the theater after the Revolutionary War, according to the traditional historical narrative, represents a new era in the theater of the now former British colonies of North America.[1] It is true that men of an educated and relatively well-kept class called for "native arts" that would distinguish the United States from Britain. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Timothy Dwight, Noah Webster, Philip Freneau and others advocated for the creation of a "high" culture that would not embarrass the new nation. Webster, in 1788, wrote that the newly-independent Americans needed to "unshackle your minds and act like independent beings . . . You have been children long enough . . . you have an empire to raise and support by your exertions and a national character to establish and extend by your wisdom and virtues."[2] These "independent beings," by and large, embraced the concept of "raising" and supporting a North American empire. And while Webster's meaning in his use of the word empire may not be perfectly synonymous with the way it is used in this study, the expansion of the United States at the expense of the indigenous residents was something of an assumption.[3] And these independent beings, through their purchase

[1] Walter Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977); Jeffrey Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993); Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[2] Noah Webster, *On the Education of Youth in America* (Boston, 1790), quoted in Eve Cornfield, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 3.

[3] Literature on this point has been cited above at various points, especially in the Introduction. But to recap, a good starting place is Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Jill Lapore, *The*

of theater tickets and their street performances, would demand and generate stories compatible with this goal. As with the public sphere of earlier periods, what was acceptable varied from place and time and was often hotly debated. This chapter demonstrates how varied these "acceptable" stories were, and how they continued to perpetuate and rationalize empire while simultaneously facilitating a democratization of the imperial process.

The American Revolution was not a war that ended with the surrender of an army after a particular battle, although historians made it into one. It was two years from Yorktown to the evacuation of New York and, as noted in the previous chapter, theaters were beginning to reopen their doors before Cornwallis's surrender – even in Quaker Philadelphia, where a bourgeois class had come to prominence. And while Congress passed another resolution in 1778 aimed at shutting down theaters that were attempting to reopen, New York, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia voted against it.[4] So the representatives from these states felt theater attendance did not have "a fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means necessary for the defence of their country and preservation of their liberties."[5]

In New York as elsewhere, theater managers had to present "acceptable stories" if they were to sell tickets. Playwright, theater manager, and artist William

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Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity (New York: Knopf, 1998); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

[4] Jared Brown, *The Theatre during the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63.

[5] *Pennsylvania Packet, or the General Advertiser*, October 17, 1778.

Dunlap, a prominent figure of the post-war theater, was among those who had his own vision of what the theater should represent. As the "Father of the American Theater," he represents a good starting place for a discussion of the relationship between theater and empire in the new United States. The concept of virtue that had provided the rhetoric of revolution and set the colonists against King-in-Parliament had also given the Euro-Americans the perception of an identity separate from Britain. After the war, Dunlap saw the continuation of this republican virtue as the criteria for separating the American from the British theater.[6] His management of the John Street and later the Park theaters in New York City was emblematic of the conflicts that arose between the juxtaposition of a need to perpetuate "republican virtue" with a nascent, market-driven entertainment industry.

The split between the Anti-Federalist and Federalist views of the new nation echoed that of the colonists with the Mother Country a generation earlier.[7] Many in

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[6] William Dunlap, *History of the American Theater and Anecdotes of the Principal Actors,* in two volumes (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963, orig. pub. 1838), I: 125. There are several full length studies of Dunlap including Oral Sumner Coad, *William Dunlap (*New York: The Dunlap Society, 1917); Charles M. Getchell, "The Mind and Art of William Dunlap (1766-1839)," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1946); William Carroll McGinnis, *William Dunlap* (Perth Amboy, NY: City of Perth Amboy, 1956); Robert H. Canary, *William Dunlap (*New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), and Maura Lyons, *William Dunlap and the Construction of American Art History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).

[7] The classic study is Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For an excellent discussion of the long-term influence of Anti-Federalism, see Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). The impact of politics on theater is most recently treated by Nathans, *Early American Theater* and Ginger Strand, "The Theater and the Republic: Defining Party on Early Boston's Rival Stages," in Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 19-35. I do not share the view of many historians that republicanism and deference are synonymous terms. For a discussion of this issue, see Joy B. And Robert R. Gilsdorf, "Elites and Electorates: Some Plain Truths for Historians of Colonial America," in David D. Hall, et.al., eds., *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 207-244. Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), David Grimstead, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago,

the new nation feared protracted and self-destructive civil unrest along these lines. Dunlap understood the power of the stage and thought it could help mend this fracture, but he bemoaned the lack of public funding for the theater. He often found himself resigned to presenting inferior works and spectacle for the sake of receipts – these "inferior works" were often the very thing that most assuaged the cognitive dissonances of imperial expansion and represented national consciousness in the public sphere. As such, Dunlap's dilemma as a New York theater manager epitomized the one facing the new nation – republican ideology may have been useful against a common enemy in a wartime situation, but the potential for accumulation in a libertarian economic environment meant that disdaining luxury and dissipation would be a hard sell. The republicanism with which Dunlap, a child of the Revolutionary era, was reared began to give way to an economic libertarianism that, on the one hand, has been interpreted as democracy in the theater, but in Dunlap's eyes, and in the eyes of many republican-minded citizens, represented corruption.[8] Theater in the early republic was divided along class lines: the wealthy took the boxes, "the middling sort" the pit, which left the gallery to the "rabble." How to fill all the seats was the problem managers faced in the face of libertarian economics that did not allow for a publicly funded theater venue. "If the theatre is abandoned to the

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1968), and Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), engage in this formulation. For its impact on popular culture, see David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[8] For democracy and theater audiences, see Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences*, 32-56. My reading of the sources indicates that such a class separation is not as clear cut as some have argued; the elephant in the living room in this literature has always been the absence of non-whites in discussions about "democracy." Class and race must be considered together and when it is, empire rears its head.

idle, the profligate," Dunlap wrote, "mercenary managers will please their visitors by such ribaldry or folly, or worse, as is attractive to such patrons and productive of profit to themselves." The fine arts had to be made "salutary instruments for refining the mass of the population" and that the dramatic art, representing a unity of all the other arts, was "a mighty engine" capable of great good or ill.[9]

The theater, Dunlap observed, could be a place where citizens (i.e., adult white males of some means), could meet together for good purpose – a more innocent or higher purpose than simple commerce – that would bind together "kindlier feelings of our common nature."[10] Dunlap felt that a theater devoted to instructing and educating the populace on the virtues of republicanism was valuable enough to elicit public support. "If the wise and good frequent the theatre, its exhibitions must become schools of wisdom – teaching patriotism, virtue, morality, and religion." "Patriotism," in Dunlap's formulation, was something more than simple jingoistic rhetoric; it meant pursuing the republican values championed by some revolutionary leaders like Washington and Jefferson and eschewing the libertarian *laissez-faire*, profit for profit's sake model that was the motivating force of the British Empire. Dunlap knew that the theater stage had the potential for corrupting as well as instructing. The Greeks, after all, had turned away from theatre and toward the circus and its blood spectacle; the Romans had embraced the gladiatorial ring.[11] "Mercenary managers," forced to focus on profit first and virtue second, as agents of economic empire – witting or not – ultimately won the day.

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[9] Dunlap, *History*, I, 129-130.

[10] Ibid., 125.

[11] Ibid, 129.

This is, in part, a story of the inability of proponents of republican cultural development, like Dunlap, to overcome the unprecedented opportunities unleashed in pursuit of the main chance by the British, now Euro-American, economic empire. While there was a mixture of classes in the theaters, the seating arrangement still reflected the stratified socio-economic structure of the broader society. In Manhattan, for instance, the formation of "landlord" and "renter" classes unfolded in the colonial period and was only modified somewhat after the revolution.[12] This process mirrored that which took place in England and elsewhere: with the help of the state, a group of men with inside connections to the workings of power obtained favorable legislation and land distribution.[13]

The mercantilist land policies of the Dutch, (e.g. the Dutch land grants in the Hudson Valley, Manhattan, and on Long Island), were perpetuated by the British all based on the "right of discovery." Between 1621 and 1653 the Dutch West India Company had had exclusive power to appropriate and grant land in the region, Native Americans notwithstanding. By the late eighteenth century, the land had long been commodified and the need for farmers and artisans attracted immigrants, which stimulated the real estate market. As the demand for land only increased, those families who had come early and obtained land began to join the ranks of a landed gentry class. The many layers of renting and leasing that eventually developed created a multi-tiered class system more egalitarian than that found in England. The more recent waves of artisan immigrants and their offspring made up much of

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[12] Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1989), 14.

[13] Elkins and McKittrick, "Introduction," in *The Age of Federalism*; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State* (New York: Knopf, 1989), passim.

William Dunlap's audience; the landed elites filled the boxes and became his landlords.[14]

While historians have engaged in a variety of approaches regarding class in the colonial and early republic periods, the relationship between class and race is still all-too-frequently overlooked.[15] The revolution had provided a kind of unity against a common enemy, but as that seminal event faded, the front-and-center role of republican virtue slowly gave way to, and became conflated with, an increasingly democratized "empire republic." The egalitarianism often discussed in regard to Euro-American culture in the U.S. is quite simply overstated. While it is true that there were free white males who, regardless of class, had citizenship or the prospect of it, this "egalitarianism" only works within an American "pigmocracy," as Ira Berlin has phrased it, and skin color was a kind of property right that could keep one off the "bottom" of the social hierarchy.[16] This class/race structure gave lower class

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[14] Blackmar, *Manhattan*, 16-28. The elites were also his audience, but they were fewer and, during much of his tenure in New York, they got free admission as part of the rental agreement – one hundred and thirteen free tickets, to be exact; Dunlap, *History*, II, 10.

[15] A sampling of works treating class include Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1913); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalization of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1991); Charles G. Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: Norton, 1984); James Huston, *Securing the Fruits of Labor: The American Concept of Wealth Distribution, 1765-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Two works that treat a later period but do address the combination of race and class is Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (New York and London: Verso, 1990); and Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For a specific discussion of class on the Boston stage in this period, see Ginger Strand, "The Theater and the Republic: Defining Party on Early Boston's Rival Stages," in Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 19-35.

[16] For "pigmocracy" see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of*

white males access to the public sphere that was unprecedented in England, because in England there was no large numbers of "Others" to chop the wood, carry the water, and grow the rice and tobacco. The "egalitarianism" to which some historians refer may be a functional concept within an ethnographic context of white, Anglo, mainstream society, but it does not include the intertwined realities of class and race.[17]

In order to rationalize the maintenance of an "underclass" of slaves, servants, prostitutes and the like, the human mind tends to project the notion of de-humanized "Others" onto these individuals. These imagined "Others" found their way out of the Euro-American mind and onto the stage, taking their place next to a parallel white self-image. The projections of these creatures from the depths of the Euro-American psyche onto the stage can be seen in the first play to which historians most often point as being the first truly "American" play, largely because of these images. Royall Tyler was a native of Boston, served in the revolutionary army, and studied law at Harvard; his play *The Contrast* was based on Richard Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. This grounding in a stock play of the Empire meant that *The Contrast* looked back to the bourgeois theaters of the British Empire on one hand, but it also

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*Slavery in North America (*Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998), 9; for skin color as a property right see, for example, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), passim.

[17] This particular observation was inspired by César Graña, "Art and the American Republic," in his *Fact and Symbol: Essays in the Sociology of Art and Literature* (New York: Oxford, 1971). Graña was critiquing Neil Harris's *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860*, New York: George Braziller, 1966), specifically, Harris's failure to mention the egalitarian nature of American society during this period. But, as with so many historians who discuss the political economics of this era, for example the spectrum contained in the works from Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992) to Winifred Rothenberg, *From Marketplaces to Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), cultural historians also tend to neglect this complexity of race and class.

looked ahead to the white-egalitarian theater of the early American republic. First produced at the John Street Theatre in New York in April of 1787, it portrayed the "contrast" between the Englishman and the American, and midwifed the birth to an Anglo-American creation – the "vanishing Indian."[18] Scene II of the play begins with "Maria," the female protagonist, singing the song "Alknomook, The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians," which became quite popular in the early republic. The song represented a contrived indigenous acquiescence to Euro-American empire:

> The sun sets at night and the stars shun the day,
> But glory remains when the light fades away.
> Begin, ye tormentors, your threats are in vain,
> For the son of Alknomook shall never complain.
>
> Remember the arrows he shot from his bow;
> Remember your chiefs by his hatchet laid low;
> Why so slow? do you wait till I shrink from my pain?
> No! the son of Alknomook shall never complain.
>
> Remember the wood where in ambush we lay,
> And the scalps which we bore from your nation away;
> Now the flame rises fast, you exult in my pain,
> But the son of Alknomook shall never complain.
>
> I'll go to the land where my father is gone;
> His ghost shall rejoice in the fame of his son;
> Death comes like a friend to relieve me from pain;
> And thy son, O Alknomook, has scorn'd to complain.

After singing the song, Maria observes that:

> There is something in this song which ever calls forth my affections. The manly virtue of courage, that fortitude which steels the heart against the keenest misfortunes, which interweaves the laurel of glory amidst the instruments of torture and death, displays something so noble, so exalted, that

[18] Don B. Wilmeth, ed., *Staging the Nation: Plays from the American Theater, 1787-1909* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), 11.

> in despite of the prejudices of education, I cannot but admire it, even in a savage.[19]

This is a continuation of Enlightenment notions of "Noble Savage" imagery but now presented with implications of diverting that imagery onto Euro-Americans as the new, true natives and masters of North America. This will be seen in full flower on the nineteenth-century stage.[20]

Also represented in *The Contrast* is the first appearance, at least in a positive sense – the English stage had represented a "buffoon" version – of a Euro-American backwoodsman in the person of Jonathan, who will become "Brother" Jonathan of the nineteenth century American stage. Jonathan's latent virtue is depicted in his Puritan-style republicanism, here appreciated but lampooned nonetheless. In this famous scene he has been to the theater but thought he was looking in on "the neighbor's living room." The play he was watching was *The School for Scandal*:

> Jonathan: [The theater is] the devil's drawing room. Yes; why ain't cards and dice the devil's device; and the playhouse, the shop where the devil hangs out the vanities of the world, upon the tenterhooks of temptation. I believe you have not heard how they were acting the old boy one night, and the wicked one came among them sure enough; and went right off in a storm, and carried one quarter of the playhouse with him. Oh! No, no, no! You won't catch me at a playhouse, I warrant you."
> Jenny: Well, Mr. Jonathan, you were certainly at the playhouse.
> Jonathan: I at the playhouse! – Why didn't I see the play then?
> Jenny: Why, the people you saw were the players.
> Jonathan: Mercy on my soul! Did I see the wicked players? -- Mayhap that 'ere Darby that I liked so, was the old serpent himself, and had his cloven foot

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[19] Ibid., 16-17

[20] See Scott Martin, "Interpreting Metamora: Nationalism, Theater, and Jacksonian Indian Policy," in Martin, ed., *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). Related to the adoption of Tammany by the artisan classes in the colonial period, I discuss this transfer of native identity more thoroughly in Chapter Six.

> in his pocket. Why, I vow, now I come to think on 't, the candles seemed to burn blue, and I am sure where I sat it smelt tarnally of brimstone.[21]

Jonathan's näiveté is both laughable and endearing. This "virtuous rustic" resonated with a Euro-American population as theater made its return to North America. In the following passage Jonathan represents a military deference to his "master" Colonel Manly's station, and his own humble but honorable position as Manly's servant.

> Yes; I do grease them [Manly's boots] a bit sometimes; but I am a true blue son of liberty, for all that. Father said I should come as Colonel Manly's waiter to see the world, and all that; but no man shall master me: my father has as good a farm as the colonel . . . [W]hy, I swear we don't make any great matter of distinction in our state, between quality and other folks.[22]

It is notable that this is a military deference, not a civilian one. While those with Federalist sympathies may have been more sympathetic to a non-military deference, an increasing number of yeoman and artisan theater-goers in the early republic would have taken offense to any kind of deference outside that of the military, and some within the military itself.

The name "Brother Jonathan" seems to have come from a military-related event. The Appendix of the two volume *Webster's Dictionary* of the mid-nineteenth century states that the name comes from none other than General George Washington. During the early months of the Revolution, apparently Washington was concerned about the ability of the army to supply itself with ammunition and other necessities. The governor of Connecticut, Jonathan Trumbell, had been a trusted confidante and aid of Washington's over the years, and Washington was heard to say

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[21] Ibid., 34-36.

[22] Ibid., 27. Joy B. And Robert R. Gilsdorf, "Elites and Electorates: Some Plain Truths for Historians of Colonial America," 207-244. The Gilsdorf's argue that their research on Connecticut shows that civilian deference is too complex and unpredictable to assume that it existed at any given time and place without concrete evidence to show it.

that "we must consult Brother Jonathan" on the subject of securing supplies for the army. The phrase was adopted by Washington's staff and it soon spread through the army and beyond. Whenever difficulties arose, someone would invariably say, "We must consult Brother Jonathan."[23]

Dunlap thought the play deficient in "plot, dialogue, or incident," but also referred to it as the moment when the American drama off the stage united with the American drama on the stage.[24] While this play did represent a Euro-American perception of indigenous people to some extent, slaves were not represented and how they were to be treated in this new political arrangement needed some sort of representation – white Americans were much closer to them than their English cousins.[25]

Several plays dealt with this matter in the aftermath of the Revolution and the Confederation period. *The Disappointment*, a play written pseudonymously by one Thomas Forrest, was originally "got up" in 1767 but shelved until 1790 because of its potentially inflammatory references to local Philadelphia businessmen.[26] This "first American comic opera" played off of the local legend of a pirate treasure buried by

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[23] William I. Paulding, ed. "Introduction," in James K. Paulding, *The Bulls and the Jonathans; Comprising John Bull and Brother Jonathan and John Bull in America* (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1867; orig. pub. Harper and Bros, 1835), 4-5.

[24] Dunlap, *History*, I, 136-137. For a study of the career of Brother Jonathan, see Winifred Morgan, *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988). Morgan points to "Yankee Doodle" as a kind of "pre-Jonathan," who is eventually, after the Civil War, replaced by "Uncle Sam."

[25] For a discussion of Euro-American views of blacks during this period, see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omahundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, 1968), esp. 482-511.

[26] Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 20, 95-96; Silverman, *Cultural History*, 104-105.

Blackbeard on the banks of the Delaware. One of the characters in the play is a certain "Raccoon," a black man who is the "cock-a-dandy" lover of one Moll Plackett, a Madam whose surname was the slang word for "vagina" and had "rais'd and laid 500 in my time." Raccoon searches for the treasure in the hopes of making Moll "fine as de queen of Shebe" and making himself "appear in de world wid de proper impotance . . . ." This "Northern Dandy," a character that would gain in popularity by the mid-nineteenth century, was a proto-"Zip Coon" who functioned to illustrate the inferiority of African Americans, particularly free blacks living in the cities, and their incapacity to raise themselves to the level of whites. Prostitution due to over-abundant sexuality was the inevitable fate of black women, as portrayed through this dialect that became the standard for a genre eventually known as the "Coon Song":

O! How joyfull shall I be,
When I get de money,
I will bring it all to dee;
O! My diddling honey.[27]

The bawdiness of this play is reminiscent of *opera buffo* popular in Europe at the time, but this type of "Negro" character was an indication of things to come in the

[27] Ibid. and Odai Johnson and William J. Burling, *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (Madison, WI and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 271. Johnson and Burling claim that Thomas Forrest wrote *The Disappointment*, while Silverman and his apparent source claim the author was most likely one Andrew Barton, a local Philadelphia merchant. See Silverman, 104 and 645, n. 7; and Haller T. Laughlin, "*The Disappointment* and *The Wheel of Fortune*: Two Amateur Playwrights' Use of Local and National Events in Early American Plays," Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1970; as well as Carolyn Rabson, "Disappointment Revisited: Unweaving the Tangled Web, Part I," in *American Music* I:1, 12-35; and "Part II," in II:1, 1-18. Rabson acknowledges the vagaries of authorship, which neither Johnson and Burling nor Pollock do. Because the play was a satire on an old Dutchman apparently looking for buried treasure on the banks of the Delaware River, it is plausible that the author used the pseudonym "Andrew Barton" because of a sixteenth-century Scottish pirate by that name immortalized in a folk song.

culture of the new United States of America. Depicting the African American as inherently inferior rationalized the institution of slavery and the general climate of racial apartheid in the new nation.[28]

William Dunlap was an abolitionist, a fairly rare bird during this period but, like most abolitionists in the early republic, he was also a supporter of African colonization – the returning of freed slaves to Africa.[29] "Blacking up" – whites performing in blackface – was nothing new to the stage – actors often played Othello in blackface, as well as the Harlequin, who had been a stock character since the medieval era.[30] But the type of performances mentioned above began to tread into what Dunlap most feared: theater put into "the hands of any person, whose sole aim is profit (either by making money or increasing his professional celebrity)." If the manager, Dunlap wrote, must please the public, the public becomes one that is only pleased by "glitter, parade, false sentiment, and all that lulls conscience or excites to evil."[31] Hero-worship of military commanders, nation-building at the expense of

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[28] How Africans and African Americans slid down the slope from "Othello" to "Moll Plackett," "Raccoon," "Mungo," et.al., is addressed in Julie Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo," unpublished paper forthcoming in *European Romantic Review*; Kris Collins, "White-Washing the Black-a-Moor: Othello, Negro Minstrelsy and Parodies of Blackness," Journal of American Culture 19:3 (1996).

[29] Dunlap was a member of New York's Manumission Society and served as "deputy" to the convention of Abolition Societies in Philadelphia in 1797. Dunlap wrote that what was "morally right cannot be politically wrong" and called for abolition among the southern states as France had done with the West Indies. He goes on to quote the French statesman Condorcet, who said it was better to "Perish over West Indian Islands rather than we should depart from the principles of justice!" But liberating slaves, Dunlap argued, does not restore them to their original condition – colonization societies were replacing abolitionists "who are to be blessed for beginning the good work." See Dunlap, *History*, I, 323, 327-328; Canary, 22.

[30] John Henry of the Old American Company "blacked up" for Othello and Dunlap, who had seen the London versions of these plays as well, said Henry was the best in this part. See Dunlap, *History*, I, 155.

[31] Dunlap, *History*, I, 133-134.

"vanishing" Indians, and "happy darkies" were ascendant. Dunlap's desire to meld the pre-revolutionary "polite" or "legitimate" theater with republican virtue was a hard sell. The lack of subsidies and the need to pay the expenses of a theater striving for legitimacy in the Atlantic cultural world would increasingly force considerations of quantity ahead of quality, even in Dunlap's theater.

A better-known play that treats race and class together is George Coleman's *Inkle and Yarico: An Opera*, which was borrowed from a story printed in an early volume of the English theater publication, *The Spectator*. It ostensibly follows the republican rhetoric of the radical Whigs of the post-1688 Revolution period, "exhibiting a picture of that heartless cupidity which too often characterizes the sons of commerce, who care little for human liberty and happiness, if they chance to obstruct them in their eager pursuit of wealth."[32] But it is the play's popularity and its treatment of non-whites that makes it most pertinent to the culture of empire in North America. The play was originally performed at London's Haymarket Theatre in 1787 and became a stock play on both sides of the Atlantic. *Inkle and Yarico* presents a pair of English travelers, Inkle and his trusted footman Trudge, who are abandoned to a seemingly horrific fate at the hands of the American "savages." Before that abandonment, Inkle is surveying the land and deducing the myriad ways one could

[32] George Coleman, *Incle and Yarico: An Opera*, *printed from the acting copy, with remarks , biographical and critical, by D—G (*London: John Cumberland, n.d.), reprinted in Elizabeth Inchbald, ed., *British Theater; or a collection of plays which are acted at Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket*, vol. IV (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808). Elizabeth Inchbald, a well-known actress of the day, is the commentator D—G. Mrs. Inchbald, as she was popularly known, like Dunlap, adapted a number of August von Kotzebue's works for the English stage. These volumes have page numbers only for individual plays, not for the entire volume.

financially benefit in the New World, Inkle submits his Uncle Medium, who is less of an entrepreneur than Inkle, to his calculations:

> Travelling, *[sic]* was always intended for improvement; and improvement is an advantage ; and an advantage is a profit; and profit is gain. Which in the travelling translation of a trader, means that you should gain every advantage of improving your profit.[33]

The three are bound for Barbados, where Inkle is to be married to the Governor Christopher Curry's daughter, Narcissa – another calculation contrived by "the old folks" according to Inkle. While stopped at an island still controlled by the natives, Medium asks him why he is calculating and "hunting old hairy negroes" – a characteristic conflation of Native Americans and Africans – when he should be "ogling a fine girl in the ship?" Inkle replies that the marriage is "a table of interest, from beginning to end." Trudge also wishes he was back at his desk "scribbling away an old parchment! – But all my red ink will be spilt by an old black pin of a negro." After pondering aloud how much the natives might fetch at West Indian markets, the three find themselves pursued by the "savages." But while Inkle and Trudge hide in a clump of trees, Medium makes it back to the ship, which sails post-haste, leaving Inkle and Trudge to their fate.

In seeking shelter from the "savages," the pair enter a cave where they find the Indian maidens Yarico and Wowski asleep in their lair. Yarico awakens and immediately reveals to the audience her lot in life with a song:

> When the close of the day is done, And the shaggy lion's skin,
> Which, forces or warrior's win, Deck our cells, at set of sun;
> Worn with toil, with sleep opprest; I press my mossy bed, and sink to rest.

[33] Ibid., 11.

> Then once more, I see our train, with all our chace *[sic]* renew'd again,
> Once more, tis day, one more, our prey, Gnashes his angry teeth, and foams in vain.
> Again, in sullen haste, he flies, Ta'en in the toil, again he lies;
> Again he roars – and, in my slumbers, dies.[34]

This reflects an imperial view of indigenous life, widely held well into the twentieth century, that native peoples lived in endless drudgery which, the implication is, could only be overcome by embracing "civilization" and adopting the white man's ways. Or, put another way, it provides justification for doing away with their way of life.

Yarico then sees Inkle and the two fall desperately in love. She speaks perfect English, unlike her maid, apparently indicating the class structure of the "savages." Inkle is pleased by her wild beauty, she by his fair skin. They sing a duet, and when Inkle asks if she would regret leaving her "grot" behind, she replies, "Ah, no, I could follow, and sail the world over, / Nor think of my grot when I look at my lover!"[35] When Trudge observes the mutual attraction, being the loyal footman, he cries, "Oho! It's time, I see, to begin making interest with the chambermaid." This conflation of Trudge with Inkle is consistent – Inkle never speaks in first person plural, but always in the singular. What is good for Inkle is good for Trudge.

For her part, Wowski maintains the proper class structure with her broken English, saying "iss" for "yes," for example. What English she knows, she tells Trudge, she learned from a strange man that had "tumbled from a big boat, many moons ago." But she acknowledges that Trudge can still "Teach me – Teach good many." In a curious reversal of the "Columbian Exchange," Wowski says that she also learned to smoke tobacco from this same white man: "Teach me put dry grass,

[34] Ibid., 17.

[35] Ibid., 19.

red hot, in hollow white stick . . . Put in my mouth – go poff, poff?"[36] And, Trudge asks, what became of this man? "Eat him one day – Our chief kill him." Wowski then sings a song that portrays the indigenous maiden's need and desire for the white man:

> White man never go away – Tell me why need you?
> Stay with your Wowski, stay: Wowski will feed you.
> Cold moons are now coming in: Ah, don't go grieve me!
> I'll wrap you in leopard's skin: White man, don't leave me.
>
> And when all the sky is blue, Sun makes warm weather,
> I'll catch you a cockatoo, Dress you in feather . . .
> When cold comes, or when 'tis hot, Ah don't go grieve me!
> Poor Wowski will be forgot – White man don't leave me![37]

Eventually, the four hale a passing ship and make their way to Barbados, where Inkle's reluctant intended, Narcissa, has rekindled an old flame between herself and one Captain Campley. Inkle, pondering the fortune that awaits him through his arranged marriage with Narcissa, reluctantly decides to sell Yarico into slavery, although he wants to insure that a benevolent owner buys her. Inkle and Narcissa's father, the Governor of the island Sir Christopher Curry had never met. Narcissa led her father to believe that Campley was Inkle and Curry therefore gave his blessing to a marriage between Campley and Narcissa. Leaving the wedding before it was over to "gather himself," Inkle approaches Curry at the wharf, not knowing who he is, and offers to sell him Yarico. At this point, Inkle and Yarico have subjected the audience to no small quantity of impassioned promises of undying

[36] I am referring of course to the fact that tobacco was an indigenous plant of the Americas and the Europeans got it from the Native Americans. For "Columbian Exchange," see Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972).

[37] Ibid., 20-21.

love and fidelity between them. In the *dénouement*, the truth comes out; Inkle is seen by all concerned, including himself, to be a picture of "heartless cupidity." He then repents of his harsh ways and promises to stay with Yarico forever – a thing which she, oddly, still desires.

There are numerous assumptions and representations in this play that fed audiences' self-image of purveyors of benevolent empire. That an Indian/Negro princess and her "chambermaid" would sacrifice all to live on a British sugar island among strangers in a strange land indicates not so much the power of love as the alleged wretched conditions in which they lived. The white man who had taught English and the fine art of tobacco use to them had also made them aware of those conditions, kindling their desire for a better life. Whether Inkle and Trudge, not to mention Barbados, were up to the challenge is arguable.

Richard Steele's original version of the story has a very different ending. Upon arriving in the "English Territories," Inkle has begun to reflect on the time and money that Yarico has cost him. In the end, he sells Yarico to a Barbadian merchant in spite of the fact that she has told him she is bearing his child.[38] The Colman version adds a complexity to *Inkle and Yarico* that one needs to acknowledge and address. The final tableau, departing from Steele's version, depicts Inkle's remorse and reunion with the Indian/Negro Yarico. As the actress and commentator Elizabeth Inchbald points out in the 1808 publication, the moral lesson here is in regard to the cupidity of commerce, especially commerce in human beings. Parliament abolished

[38] Richard Steele, "Inkle and Yarico," in *The Spectator*, 13 March, 1711. A collection of the various versions of this story can be found in Frank Felsenstein, ed., *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World, an Inkle and Yarico Reader* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

the African slave trade in the Empire in 1807, the year before this particular publication of the play. Its opening in 1787, the year the United States debated a Constitution that included twenty-year sunset clause on the African slave trade, puts it in a vein of awakening sensitivity to the brutalities of slavery that occurred during the "Age of Revolution." In most of the Atlantic World, this sensitivity increased in the nineteenth century. In the American South however, slavery expanded and the moment of clarity regarding slavery would pass, creating more demand for rationale on the theater stage.

A variant of Dunlap's sentiments regarding the corrupting force of profit on the theater can be seen as far away as Charleston, South Carolina. Writing under the pen name "Civis" in January of 1786, one individual expressed an interest in opening a new theater but that the corrupt works of English playwrights were unworthy of the new nation. If legislators could utilize their

> [M]anifold avocations [to] undertake the superintendence of the pieces to be performed before they should be presented to the public, all difficulties would be at an end . . . The morals and manners of this country are too chaste to leave reason to apprehend than any improper plays will be written here for perhaps centuries to come.[39]

While Charleston's theater scene largely followed that of the sugar islands and other southern colonies before the Revolution, the war changed all that. It should be remembered that South Carolina was the only state other than Delaware south of the Mason-Dixon line to vote for the Congressional injunction against theater in 1778.[40] After the war, numerous plays written by Charlestonians were presented, including

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[39] Charleston *Morning Post*, 16 January, 1786; quoted in Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century* (Columbia: The State Company, 1924), 95-96.

[40] See above, 177.

some that seem to fit the pattern in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Annapolis, and elsewhere. Examples include *The 28th of June, or, The Attack on Fort Moultrie*; *America Preserved, or, the Americans and French at the Siege of Yorktown*; and *Americana, or, A Tale of the Genii*.[41] *The 28th of June* was a locally-written play with an *Ode* written by one Mrs. Marriott. It was first performed in the French Theatre by Alexander Placide's troupe in 1794 on the anniversary of the occasion and again on the 4th of July. The play was written in honor of General William Moultrie's spirited defense of Fort Sullivan (later renamed in his honor) in June of 1776 that invigorated the patriot cause in the South. While the secondary literature shows no record of it, it is probable that General Moultrie, recently retired from public life as a member of Congress from South Carolina, was in attendance. *America Preserved* was a recreation of the Yorktown battle after the growing demand for such re-enactments on the stage. *Americana* circulated throughout the eastern seaboard and was actually rediscovered and reproduced in New York in 1985.[42] It was a re-enactment play and can be counted among the early melodramatic works written and produced in America.[43] All of these plays fall into a sub-genre of battle re-enactments that reflect

[41] Willis, *Charleston Stage*, 247-248, 277-278; *Americana, or, a New Tale of the Genii* (Baltiimore: W. Pechin, 1802); and W. Stanley Hoole, *The Ante-Bellum Charleston Theatre* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1946), xviii. Theater, Hoole notes, has been left out of the historical literature on southern culture. There is not much recent material on the topic of theater in the South. For Charleston, see Mary Julia Curtis, "The Early Charleston Theatre, 1703-1798," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Indiana, 1968. For Richmond see Martin Staples Shockley, *The Richmond Stage, 1784-1812* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia); for New Orleans, a work that treats primarily the nineteenth century and attributes the origins of theater there to French refugees from the rebellion in Santo Domingo, see Nelle Smither, *A History of the English Theatre in New Orleans* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967, orig. pub. 1944), 7. On the origins of New Orleans theater, Smither cites Nellie Warner Price, "Le Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, I:3 (January, 1918), 221-223.

[42] "Music Notes: City Opera Records *Candide*," *New York Times*, 9 June, 1985.

[43] For Moultrie's military career, see John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The*

a heightened interest on both sides of the Atlantic – because of their ability to fill seats – in large-scale militaristic productions.[44]

In New York, while Dunlap warned of the problems inherent in combining market economics with the theater, he was at the mercy of those forces himself. His dilemma was that of coming up with fresh material that would be artistically satisfying and still fill the seats. Dunlap and other theater managers dealt with this in a variety of ways. One play, *The Poor Soldier*, featured Thomas Wignell in one of his most popular roles as an Irish soldier named "Darby." Wignell requested something new for Darby, an Interlude perhaps, where Darby would return to Ireland after his adventures in the King's army. As a result, Dunlap wrote *Darby's Return*, one of the early sequels on the American stage. True to form, Dunlap made Darby into an American Cincinnatus that embodied republican virtue and proved very popular, being published numerous times. In 1789, the play was performed with George Washington himself in attendance. In a particularly rich historical moment, the character of a humble, rural, republican-minded Irish soldier spoke words reminiscent of the much-championed Roman republican Cincinnatus, historicized for the new republic in the physical and mythical person of General Washington who was watching the performance from a box seat:

> A man who fought to free the land from wo,
> *Like me*, had left his farm, a-soldiering to go;

American Revolution in the Carolinas (New York: Wiley, 1997), 6-16, 39, 48, 71.

[44] See Thomas Postlewait, "From Melodrama to Realism: The Suspect History of American Drama," in Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikopoulou, *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 39-60; and Lothar Fietz, "On the Origins of the English Melodrama in the Tradition of Bourgeois Tragedy and Sentimental Drama: Lillo, Schröder, Kotzebue, Sheridan, Thomas, Jerrold," in ibid., 83-102.

> But having gain'd his point, he had, *like me*,
> Return'd his own potato ground to see.
> But there he could not rest. With one accord
> He's called to be a kind – not a lord –
> I don't know what, he's not a *great man*, sure,
> For poor men love him just as he were poor,
> The love like a father or a brother.

To which "Dermot" replies: "As we poor Irishmen love one another." Here was a conflation of republican virtue with democratic solidarity – a conflation from Dunlap's soul with an eye toward drawing the artisan democrat-republicans of New York to his theater. Darby went on about how he never got to see General Washington because he had mistaken him for a man that was "all lace and glitter, botherum and shine." To which Washington reportedly unloosed a hearty laugh – a moment of glory for the young playwright/manager Dunlap.

An analysis of this passage reveals two levels of mythmaking. First, there is the projection of a democratic ideal onto those who were perceived as perhaps the most humble white men of the day and the lowest ranking group allowed into the fold by virtue of their skin color and familiarity – the Irish; then there is the worship of the new nation's virtue epitomized in the ideal republican – Washington.[45] It was heretofore a rare moment, revealing the great hopes many had that this new political entity would manifest the long-held dreams of humanity – defined as white Euro-Americans. As Dunlap frequently stated, the stage was a "great engine," of virtue or of vice. And however democratic white Americans perceived themselves to be, the vast majority of them ultimately turned to an owner of slaves and a member of a landed elite not only for leadership, but for projecting a nearly god-like reverence

[45] Dunlap, *History*, I, 160-161.

reminiscent of a child's view of his father.[46] And, ultimately, the non-white were excluded from the democratic club of citizenship – indeed, they were seen as inferior and, in the case of indigenous peoples, objects of conquest, i.e. "Vanishing Indians." Historians must attempt to understand this paradox.

James K. Paulding, writing in the *American Quarterly Review* some forty years later and referenced by Dunlap in his *History*, observed that the "national drama," (i.e., theater), was one that appealed "directly to national feeling –

> [F]ounded upon domestic incidents – illustrating or satirizing domestic manners, and above all, displaying a generous chivalry in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities of situation and character by which we are distinguished from all other nations. We do not hesitate to say that next to the interests of eternal truth, there is no object more worthy the exercise of the highest attributes of mind than that of administering to the just pride of national character, inspiring a feeling for national glory, and inculcating a love of country.[47]

One could also say that nationalistic – even jingoistic – propaganda that attuned the population to "empire raising" was not only desirous to further the goals of an economic empire, but would allow those doing it to feel good about it.

This appeal to nationalistic sentiment would be aided by the arrival to New York in 1792 of one of the famed Kemble family of England, sister of the beloved Mrs. (Sarah) Siddons – Mrs. (Anne Julia Kemble) Hatton. Mrs. Hatton soon had a new play called *The Songs of Tammany, or, the Indian Chief: A Serious Opera*, and was looking for someone to bring it to the stage. Mrs. Hatton had already had a

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[46] There is a body of psychological literature that explores the potential negative impact on a society resulting from such hero-worship. A good starting point is Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, trans. by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983).

[47] James K. Paulding, *American Quarterly Review* 2 (1828), quoted in Dunlap, *History*, I, 163.

checkered career as a "model" in a London bagnio (brothel), had unknowingly married a bigamist (one C. Curtis), and survived a gunshot to the face which apparently caused no great disfigurement. She was reportedly overweight, lame, had a squint, and had been scarred by smallpox. As a result, her own stage appearances had been limited largely to provincial theater stages. Her second marriage to William Hatton, an instrument-maker, had a stabilizing affect, and her penchant for gothic melodrama proved timely as the popularity of the genre was on the rise.[48] Dunlap cynically noted that Mrs. Hatton "kindly came to instruct us in the history of the country, the value of liberty and the duties of the patriot."[49] It played to good houses in March and April of 1794. But apparently its quality left something to be desired as Dunlap referred to it as a "tissue of bombast."[50] Dunlap's disdain probably stemmed from the fact that Mrs. Hatton had presented the play to the local Tammany Society, who endorsed it and recommended it to John Hodgkinson – the popular English actor who had also recently arrived. With Hodgkinson on their side, Dunlap noted that no manager could have rejected something from the Sons of St. Tammany.[51]

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[48] See the entry for "Hatton, Ann" in Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 498-99.

[49] Dunlap, *History*, I:213.

[50] Ibid., 209; for dates of performance, see http://www.ibdb.com/production.asp?ID=13441#Tammany.

[51] Ibid., 220. See Chapter Two on the birth of Tammany Clubs in the eighteenth century. For a reconstruction of the Tammany legend that is rather mystifying in its own right, see Joseph White Norwood, *The Tammany Legend: Tamanend* (Boston: Meador Publishing, 1938). This book is perhaps the ultimate conflation of American democracy with indigenous culture, and indicates the power of this connection in the long term.

Almost all of the music and script are lost – all that remains are lyrics to the dozen or so songs in the play.[52] But these lyrics provide insight into the culture that championed this play as well as supporting for the claim that theater was a vehicle for rationalizing and assuaging the brutal excesses of the expanding economic empire. The two main characters in the play are Tammany and his wife Manana. While we cannot know the exact dialogue, the songs do provide a rough guide to such plot developments as there were. The first two songs are a song to the sun and a song to the woods sung by Manana. The third song praises the sweetness of nature, but proclaims the sweetness of Tammany to be greater still. She then sings of the glory of Tammany's hunting and warring skills. Portrayed essentially as children, a "Chorus of Indians" sing of victory in battle near "Or'noco's limpid stream," which continues:

> Late our chiefs were stain'd with blood;
> War resounded thro' the wood;
> Now the battles din is o'er;
> Fury swells our souls no more;
> Now we laugh and dance and play;
> Happy Indians; come away.[53]

The refrain, "Happy Indians," is repeated several times in this and the next song. The British often referred to the colonists as wayward children, and the cultural core of the splinter empire now viewed Indians and for that matter whites living in the West to be children who should obey their wise father. The dichotomy of wise parent

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[52] See Susan L. Porter, *With an Air Debonair: Musical Theatre in America, 1785-1815* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 13.

[53] Ann Julia (Kemble) Hatton, *The Songs of Tammany, or, The Indian Chief: A Serious Opera* (New York: Harisson and Faulkner, 1794, available on Early American Imprint Series, Evans 27100), 1-7.

(Britain or the post-Constitution Federalist government), and unruly child (Indians, frontiersmen, yeomen farmers, artisans), became an institutionalized construction in the Federalist period.[54]

The play opened in a political climate polarized by such dialectic thinking and "St. Tammany's friends" planned a ruse intended to bring in receipts. A rumor circulated that a group was planning to hiss the play and "the poorer class of mechanics and clerks and bankrupt people who should be content with the mischief they had already done, and who might be much better employed than in disturbing a theater," arrived to protect the Saint's dignity. The only disturbance reported was one directed at the leader of the orchestra, James Hewitt, (who also composed the music for the play), for not having a popular air ready to hand when it was demanded, a behavioral trend that would only increase.[55] For his part, Dunlap did not appreciate being manipulated, whether it was by the audience or by "overmighty" star actors like John Hodgkinson.

While Mrs. Hatton's play was not considered a work of sophistication, it was applauded by the mechanics and artisans of the early republic. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Tammany was a Delaware leader who had negotiated a couple of treaties with William Penn in the late seventeenth century. The Schuylkill Fishing Company of Philadelphia had adopted him as their patron saint, since they argued that

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[54] For reference to "White Indians" in the West by eastern military people, see William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 211. See also Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). A strictly White/Indian construction of the dichotomy characterized the later Jacksonian Period; see Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1975).

[55] Dunlap, *History*, I:212.

these treaties had given them fishing rights to the river. The Tammany figure represents the first widespread and sustained conflation of Euro-American with indigenous American identities.[56] A bit of drinking helped cement the union – the Indian character Wegaw sings a song called "For deep sups of this Liquor I swear," that continues:

> Have made foolish Wegaw quite wise,
> And faith now, I can tell to a hair,
> What's doing above in the skies.
>
> The sun is a deep-thinking fellow,
> He dries up the dews of the night,
> Lest old father Time should get mellow,
> And so become slow in his flight.
>
> The moon she loves drinking, 'tis plain,
> She governs the tides of each flood,
> And oft takes a sip from the main;
> You may know by her changeable mood.
>
> Thou dear tippling orb give me drink,
> Large lakes full of glorious rum!
> My head turns, I'm swimming I think –
> Sweet Rhema! Why look you so glum?[57]

This pokes fun at the image of an inferior and child-like alcoholic Indian while revealing the pathos inherent in alcoholism. The first of these would appeal to those who might identify with such a state of drunkenness; the second would be recognizable to the more sober and calculating in the audience.

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[56] Donald A. Grind, Jr., and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplars of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: UCLA Native American Studies Center, 1991), Chapter 9, "The American Synthesis"; Norwood, *The Tammany Legend*, passim.

[57] Grenville Vernon, *Yankee Doodle-Do: A Collection of Songs of the Early American Stage* (New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd., 1927), 30. For a generalized overview of the music of this period, see John Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era* (Westport, CT: Grenwood Press, 2004).

Apparently, the Spanish have a significant role in this play – one "Ferdinand" sings a song for Manana while Tammany is away. He refers to her as a "sweet simple maid" whom "the white man loves, pray believe me." Manana and Tammany then separately together have a sense of foreboding and war. Tammany senses problems with Manana and vows revenge if she is harmed. Manana bemoans the return of violence, "war spreads his flaming brands around."[58] Using the tune of "Alknomook, The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians," the popular song of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, Tammany then, for the first time in the play, condemns the white invaders:

> The sun sets in night and the stars shun the day,
> But glory unfading can never decay,
> You white men deceivers your smiles are in vain;
> The son of Alkmoonac, shall ne'er wear your chains.

To which, Manana adds:

> To land where our fathers are gone we will go,
> Where grief never enters but pleasures still flow,
> Death comes like a friend: he relieves us from pain,
> Thy children, Alkmoonac, shal ne'er wear their chain.

Then both sing:

> Farewell then ye woods which have witnessed our shame
> Let time on his wings hear our record of fame.
> Together we die for our spirits disdain,
> Ye white children of Europe your rankling chain.[59]

In other words, they willingly depart the world, leaving North America to the European invaders. But this is too dark of a tone to set the mood for a post-Indian America. The next song begins to assuage the negative feelings that may have arisen:

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[58] Hatton, *Songs of Tammany*, 9-13.

[59] Ibid., 13-14.

Now let's forget each woe that's past
Mirth,joy and peace are ours at last.
To jocund measures let us move,
By the bright moon-beams in the grove,
Hither haste with frolic gay,
Sons of India: haste away.

Chorus:
Sorrow no more with us is found;
Peace, joy and frolic, mirth resound;
While ev'ry wood and ev'ry grove,
Echoes the melting song of love."
Hither haste with frolic gay,
Sons of India: haste away.

Here commences an extended song singing the praises of Tammany and Manana, their bravery and virtue, by Indian priests and Spaniards together. With that, the inevitable ethnic cleansing is again resumed, albeit somewhat tempered by humble respect for the vanquished:

While we rear the standard high,
Weep upon our victory.
Let fame her clarion sound,
To the list'ning world proclaim,

Throughout all her ample round,
Laurel'd conquest and bright fame,
Yet let humanity still fervid glow,
Showing soft mercy to the vanquish'd foe.[60]

As sad as it may be, this song bemoans, the Indians must go. But, the mythic construction implies, the brave and virtuous American yeoman and mechanic will be here to perpetuate the memory and glory of the likes of Tammany and Manana. Indeed, the "Sons of Tammany" had essentially brought the play to the stage. The populist appeal of the play to the mechanics and artisans of New York was rooted in

[60] Ibid., 16.

the conflation of Euro-American working class republican values with the "Noble Savage" of North America. As this ethnicity was being "cleansed" from the cultural geography of the continent, the Sons of Tammany would see to it that their virtue would live on in the artisan culture of the new republic. This would be familiar theme well into the nineteenth century. Dunlap, and his compatriots in Boston, Philadelphia, Annapolis, and Charleston, bit their tongues and sold tickets to audiences wanting to see the culture of empire validate the national project.

Dunlap's political views remained somewhat ambiguous – he was not a hard-line Federalist by any means, although his brother-in-law Timothy Dwight certainly was, and some of his intimates in the "Friendly Club," like Charles Brockton Brown and Elihu Hubbard Smith leaned in that direction. The Friendly Club was a small group of mutual friends in New York City who met to discuss philosophy and current affairs. Their interests seemed to center more around religious questions than Federalist vs. Republican. Dunlap confided to his diary that when he visited his in-laws, the Woolseys, he felt himself to be a "poor Infidel philosopher," reminding strident Federalist Christians to "turn the other cheek."[61] So, it is most likely that Dunlap's frustrations with some of the more popular stage plays had to do more with literary finesse than with politics.

In an age of revolution, attempts to wrest power away from not only monarchs and aristocrats, but from wealthy middle class bankers, merchants, and planters characterized the years up to the Jeffersonian Revolution of 1800. The economic and

[61] Canary, 21; Dorothy C. Barck, ed., *Diaries of William Dunlap*, 3 vols. (New York: New York State Historical Society, 1930), I: 292; David Grimstead, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 5-6.

philosophical split that had led to revolution in North America was recreated in the aftermath because the same forces still existed in Euro-American society. Most histories focus on this dichotomy.[62] But all too often lost in the historiography of the polarized political environment of the 1790s is the fact that the majority of the wealth under dispute was created either by slaves or from land forcibly taken from its inhabitants – i.e., from the activities of empire. Plays like Anne Hatton's and others were jingoistic rationales for the economic empire and individuals like Dunlap knew it. But libertarian economics was well-established at this point, and it was market society which dictated success or failure, especially in the urban environment. Showing people what they wanted to see and telling them what they wanted to hear was more profitable than moral, philosophical, and civic instruction.

In 1797, a recently-arrived Irishmen by the name of John Daly Burk saw his play *Bunker-Hill, or, The Death of General Warren* performed at the newly-opened Haymarket Theatre in Boston. Plays depicting the deaths of generals were a standard feature of the culture of empire – General Joseph Warren had died at the Battle of Breed's Hill, more commonly known as Bunker's Hill. No relation to Mercy's husband James, his brother John would become Governor of Massachusetts and eventually found Harvard Medical School. When he was killed, his commission as General was not yet in effect so he volunteered to serve in General Israel Putnam's army as a private, although he was a commander in the battle. Killed by a ball to the

[62] The classic study being Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: Politics and Government, 1789-1809* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

head, his death made him a martyr in the view of the continentals, and a John Trumbull painting captured the sentiment.

The success of the play reinforced for theater managers the fact that their audiences wanted to see the "glories" of the Revolution reflected on the stage now that the horrors were beginning to fade. Burk was impassioned by the revolution brewing in his own homeland, and expressed his anti-British sympathies through this play. The Haymarket Theater had been opened in response to the perceived lack of republican sentiment represented on the stage of manager John B. Williamson's Federal Street Theater. Williamson, responding to Burk's play, described it as a "tragedy, the most execrable of the Grub Street kind," brought about by the rage for novelty and an appeal to the "Jacobin spirit in the lower ranks." Dunlap, whose politics remained ambiguous to the end of his life, called it "deplorable" and was "sorry to say it was afterwards played in New-York."[63] Burk had written much of the play on the passage from Ireland to America and the fresh republican spirit of revolution from Ireland rekindled similar sentiments in American audiences.[64]

That the American Revolution had been an Atlantic world phenomenon and not just an American one can be readily seen from Burk's play. The popularity of this republican sentimentalism reveals the assumptions of people who had survived a prolonged war that was ultimately fought for the democratization of the Atlantic economic empire. The secular "hellfire and brimstone" that characterized the

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[63] Dunlap, *History*, I, 312.

[64] Richard Moody, ed., *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1966), 62; Dunlap, *History*, I, 313; Ginger Strand, "The Theater and the Republic," passim. For the Irish uprising of 1798, see Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

"Prologue" harkens back to Oliver Goldsmith's recommendation that actors should adopt the "enthusiasm" that was sweeping the Empire during the "Great Awakening." "Enthusiasm" in the employ of what amounts to a propagandist on a theater stage is revealing enough to include in its entirety:

> When o'er Columbia's fields in fearful hour,
> Glared the red Comet of Britannia's power,
> From horrid hair shook flakes of burning wrath.
> And war and desolation mark'd its path:
> Rous'd by the fury of her ruthless foes,
> The angry Genius of Columbia rose:
> There, with a voice more loud, more deep than fate,
> Was rent the fabric of monarchic State,
> And instantaneous, soothing as the lyre,
> Which wakes the soul and kindles soft desire,
> She called the *great Republic* into day,
> And to a world, restored its legal sway:
> Behold; her patriot band the low lands fills
> Like to the torrents of a thousand hills,
> Which thund'ring to the plain their waters roll,
> Unite, condense, and form a mighty whole;
> Columbia's Sons down Allegheny's sides
> Their fiery cohorts pour in rapid tides:
> Whilst o'er the glassy surface of the flood,
> Light'd by the Sun, a gallant vessel rode;
> The Ark which bears the charter of the land
> It sail'd directed by the Almighty hand:
> "Till safe at length from tempest and from flood,
> Secure on freedom's Ararat it stood.
> Thus did this great, this glorious Empire rise,
> Which lifts its patriot honors to the skies;
> Spite of the bloody lash, the tyrant's frown,
> The shock of armies and a fleet's renown.
> A nobler theme than this, to grace the stage,
> Where can we find in all th' historic page?
> Of Rome's and Cato's fall, the World has rung:
> Why not Columbia's rising fame be sung?
> If Rome her Brutus and her Cato boast;
> Her Washington and Warren, each a host,
> Columbia owns; with thousand names beside.

The least of which would swell the Roman pride:
And midst these themes sublime, these subjects grand
Which tempt the poet's fancy in this land,
Where is there one more potent to inspire
Conceptions vast, and wake Parnassian fire,
Than when on Bunker's top a glorious hand
Pour'd out their sacred blood to save the land?
And ere they fell, such fierce destruction hurl'd;
As when Volcanoes burn and tear the world.
Such is our Bard's excuse that he this night
Renews the horrors of fam'd Bunker's fight,
And, bending suppliant at your awful shrine,
His Child to your protection doth consign:
Assur'd of Justice, he has dar'd to trace,
Columbia's Glories to Columbia's race.[65]

This "blood and thunder" employs a Great Flood of clichés from Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman discourse. Captured in this prologue, and in the play itself, is the audience's need to have the character and motivations of the new republic couched in a virtuousness of biblical dimensions. The conflation of the U.S. with "Ararat" and Rome, the historicization of Cato in the figures of Washington and Warren – the latter assumes a Christ-like significance in his martyrdom in the play – represent a proto-Manifest Destiny. The democratization of empire, as experienced by mainstream white America, is represented and embodied in works like *Bunker-Hill*, and represents a continuation of sentiments expressed in Mercy Otis Warren's closet plays. That is, the martyrdom of the fallen began with the earliest conflicts between the English colonists and the American Indians in their successful efforts to usurp the Indians' land base. This performance, though it is of the "execrable Grub Street kind," transfers this same kind of martyrdom to the revolutionary generation.

[65] Moody, *Dramas*, 70-71.

Burk's play was first presented at the Haymarket Theater in Boston, which was set up by contributions from the city's mechanics who perceived the need for a theater that presented entertainments in opposition to the Federal Theater, thought by many to be controlled by Federalist politicians. Charles Stuart Powell had made arrangements to sell shares to build a republican theater, traveled to Europe to recruit a cast and, on the day after Christmas of 1796, opened the Haymarket.[66] It was an immense wooden structure that was visible above all the other buildings in the city. Ginger Strand has illustrated the political differences that can be seen in the two plays, *Gustavas Vasa* and *Bunker-Hill*. Here the latter represents General Warren as a martyr for the republican cause, the former represents an elite posing as one of the "mob" and allowing his mother, sister, and lover to die rather than surrender himself to tyranny. Radical republicans might have observed that it was just like a Federalist to let someone else die for your beliefs. In any case, on February 17, 1797, *Bunker-Hill* debuted at the Haymarket.[67]

Burk's play features two main characters, both of whom die in the play. One is martyred and the other is depicted as a victim of his own misplaced allegiance to the British. General Warren is, of course, the martyr who dies for the cause of republicanism although it is a relatively short time from the moment when he must decide whether or not to defect to the patriot cause and when he is killed in the battle. The other is a British soldier named Abercrombie who is in love with Elvira – the Euro-American daughter of a North Carolina planter. Burk forces him to choose

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[66] William W. Clapp, Jr., *A Record of the Boston Stage* (Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company, 1853), 36-37.

[67] Strand, "The Theater and the Republic," 25-28; Moody, *Dramas*, 62.

between misplaced honor (loyalty to the King), and Elvira. He chooses the former, which leads directly to his demise and Elvira's despair. The play's verse is wooden, but the reproduction of the battle itself was guaranteed to get the heart pumping and bring in the receipts, which gave it a vibrant and long life – a perennial favorite on July 4th and November 25th (Evacuation Day) – well into the nineteenth century.[68]

Burk sent the script to Dunlap with instructions for executing the battle scene and an offer to sell him the right to "get up" the play in New York.[69] Dunlap declined, but John Joseph Leger Solee, the Charleston theater manager who had brought his troupe north in the summer to test the waters, was interested.[70] He tried to open the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia in August, 1797 but was prevented by a recurrence of yellow fever, a perennial hazard south of New England. He did receive permission to use the decaying theater on John Street in New York, however, and Dunlap witnessed "all the smoke, noise, and nonsense, belonging to Mr. John Burk's muse."[71]

While Dunlap was not impressed by Burk's play, he was impressed enough by the receipts to produce his own version of a similar play. First drafted as *André* and later revised as *The Glory of Columbia: Her Yeomanry!*, Dunlap used this play and other similar original works for those occasions where the audience expected a

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[68] *Bunker-Hill or, The Death of General Warren*, in ibid., 70-86. The Manichean genre of melodrama was on the rise during this period of American theater and would only increase for the next several generations.

[69] Dunlap, *History*, I, 313-315.

[70] Solee was quite influential in Charleston, South Carolina, managing the French, or Church Street, Theater in that city. He represents another theater person who worked in that grey zone between circus and theater. See Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century: With Social Settings of the Time* (Charleston: The State Company, 1924), 237, 256.

[71] Ibid., 370-371.

representation of American nationalistic sentiment from the theater stage. Dunlap had revised *André* because of a particular scene where the imminent hanging of the popular actor and scene painter – who also happened to be a British major and accomplice in the betrayal of the hated Benedict Arnold – was protested by an American soldier. This fictional soldier had worked with the Major at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia and the two were very close. Dunlap's distaste for the execution of the talented André was not shared by audiences and when the character of an American soldier tore the patriot cockade from his hat after his futile efforts to prevent André's execution, the audience reacted negatively – so negatively that Dunlap had to go onstage himself to apologize for and explain the scene to calm the audience. In the end, there was no cockade-tearing in *The Glory of Columbia,* but the author's disdain for André's execution still comes across. While the verse is more subtle and sophisticated than that of Burk's play, Dunlap was not fond of the piece or the way it continued to be "occasionally murdered for the amusement of holiday fools."[72] But it drew a crowd.

Like *Bunker-Hill*, *Columbia* contained mythic messages that the playwright knew would resonate with the audience. For example, the character of David Williams is basically a Brother Jonathan as a Patriot soldier with overtones of Cincinnatus and Cato. In Act I, Scene 2, Dunlap has Williams, who just extracted himself from being General Arnold's aide-de-camp, say:

> So I be free from brushing coats and blacking boots! Dang it, pretty employment for a soldier! I be nation glad to part from the general; for certain he is changed dreadfully since I took him to serve him. Now 'fore I

[72] Dunlap, *History*, II, 20.

> turn into the ranks again, I'll go and see how old father do, and Sal, and the pigs, and the cow; then back again and shoulder my gun till no color is seen this side the water but blue.[73]

And later, addressing his sister Sal: "[T]ake care of father and the cows; and the children and pigs and rest of the live stock."[74] These were the early years of the republican empire that starred the white yeoman farmer, a demographic that was by far in the majority and who, along with artisans and mechanics, were increasingly attracted to the theaters.

Like Jonathan, Williams wears his virtue on his sleeve. This is seen in the following passage when Major André, caught by Williams and his compatriots behind the American's lines after his secret meeting with Arnold, attempts to bribe them and Williams responds:

> Why I tell you what, mister, likely there is more in that there purse, than father's farm's worth stuck and all: but somehow or other there is a sort of something here [pointing to his breast] that we Yankees don't choose to truck for money.[75]

André "demonstrates" his compromised virtue after being escorted to General Washington by Williams and friends, (he is on the wrong side, after all), in a similarly unsubtle fashion:

> Tis well: you have taught me to reverence an American farmer. You have given me a convincing proof, that it is not high attainments, or distinguished rank, which ensure virtue, but rather early habits, and moderate desires. You have not only captured – you have *conquered* me (italics in original).[76]

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[73] Moody, *Dramas*, 95.

[74] Ibid., 101.

[75] Ibid., 98.

[76] Ibid., 99.

Dunlap injects some levity into the proceedings, which are otherwise somewhat wrenching (i.e., men about to be executed and their loved ones pleading for their lives intermingling with the perceived glory and necessity of dying and killing for a noble cause). This takes form in the Irishman, Dennis O'Bogg – another ethnic character that has great traction on the American (and English) stage. O'Bogg deserts the British army to join with the Americans, ostensibly to escape his two wives – a situation which he describes in convoluted monologues regarding his implied sexual prowess. One song he sings concludes:

> The frenchman gay with his louis d'or,
> The solemn don, and the soft signor,
> The dutch mynheer, so full of pride,
> The russian, prussian, swede beside;
> They all may do whate're they can
> But they'll never love like an Irishman.[77]

While the Irishman would eventually lose much of his republican-era stature, he was, in these instances, portrayed as hard-drinking, hard-living, but basically virtuous republican. The Irish were, after all, enemies of the British, and republicanism had a decidedly pro-French, pro-Irish bent.

George Washington was quite conscious of his larger-than-life image and took great pains to live up to the public persona that revolutionary America saw in him. That he was the "Father of Our Nation" has long been a cliché – but a brief study of *The Glory of Columbia, HerYeomanry!* reveals just how much this was true. In Act II, Scene 3, Dunlap composed the following exchange between Williams and his compadres, Van Vert and Paulding – fellow yeoman from New York state – after

[77] Ibid., 113-114, the diminutive spellings are in the original.

their delivery of André to General Washington. The General immediately discovered the damning note in André's purse that proved Arnold's betrayal and thanked the soldier-farmers for their good works:

> Van Vert: Now comrades, we have received the only reward a soldier ought to look for; and though the general has assured us of reward from our country, yet all a soldier should wish is the thanks of his commander.
> Paulding: The thanks of his commander, and the approbation of his own conscience.
> Williams: Dang it, what a nice warm feel a man has here about the upper part of his waistcoat, when he knows he's been doing what he ought to do. I don't think I ever felt so proud as I did just now, when our great commander, our own glorious Washington, took me by the hand and said, "thank you," ay he said, "well done my lad, thank you."
> Paulding: We must always remember the moment as the most glorious of our lives. The approbation of our country is at all times precious, but when that approbation is made known by such a man, so glorious and so dignified, it becomes inestimable.
> Van Vert: What a noble soldierly mien!
> Paulding: O bless his face, say I! to a lad who has not seen any thing but continental bills for a twelvemonth, the sight of a white faced Carolus, or a yellow George Rex, oughtent be as bad as a wet Sunday; yet dang me, if I hadn't rather see a Washington's head, on a deal board, than all the gold heads in the bank of England.[78]

The tenor of this conversation is a mixture of hero-worshipping and moral lecturing. But Dunlap was trying to combine what he saw as the often-awkward combination of pandering for public attention for receipts, and republican instruction for the sake of the new nation. The patriarch Washington as the Father of the Country actually reflects a disturbing and highly-studied familial paradigm. Washington was the Father of a family called the United States. Whatever the United States family intended to do was by definition beyond reproach. Anyone who contradicted this mythic structure represented the enemy. In the end, it all adds up to the

[78] Ibid., 100; all misspellings, colloquialisms, and diminutives in the original.

representation of imperial expansion as the perpetuation of virtue, a kind of bait-and-switch that obscured the truth that the new republic had more in common with the British Empire than most were willing to admit.

Dunlap was a fervent believer in government-subsidized theater. In this era of republican idealism, revolutionary sentiment was still very strong and profiteering still frowned upon by a large segment of society. Indeed, Madison himself had recently argued that making money without productive labor was immoral. Dunlap was unambiguous about how to ensure that theatre was used for the good:

> [M]ake the theatre an object of governmental patronage; take the mighty engine into the hands of the people as represented by their delegates and magistrates . . . Pure instruction "could" banish the poison of the licensed murderers in every corner and every avenue of our towns . . . If an association of men of taste, literature, and moral standing in the community, should build and open a theatre upon such a plan, select a man of acquirements fitted for the management and pay him liberally, not allowing him any interest in the profits or losses, and supervising the whole by a committee or otherwise, gain would not be the object of such an association, and yet gain might accrue. Actors, in either case, of a theatre protected by the government or by an association of private individuals should be well paid and selected for their morals as well as their talents; they would then be instruments of good at all times; and, sheltered from the temptations which now beset the profession, they would be honoured in private as applauded in public.[79]

The connections between economic empire, which increasingly in the United States meant speculation, and the economics of the theater in this period have been documented elsewhere. Heather Nathans, Ginger Strand, and others have shown how the economics of the Federal period defined the politics and how theater tried playing to both the Federalist and Republican groups.[80] The concept of republican virtue that

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[79] Dunlap, *History*, I, 130-131.

[80] Heather Nathans, *Early American Theater*, 83-84; Strand, "The Theater and the Republic".

Mercy Warren had popularized and Dunlap hoped to perpetuate was fairly strong through the years of the early republic. But the draw of economic empire was powerful – where anyone willing to play the game – to "strive with the strivers" – had a chance to strike it rich. Federalists, the economic elite and their followers who supported market economics, and those more with republican sympathies, often called Jacobins after their French counterparts, Jeffersonians or Republicans, competed fiercely with each other in the polarized 1790s and represented two different visions for the new nation.[81] Interestingly, from the aspect of empire, both were determined to perpetuate the "empire republic." The disputed concerns were a matter of economic democracy within the broader context of empire. Indeed, the Republicans were often at least as interested in obtaining the lands of indigenous peoples and for that matter owning slaves, two principal aspects of this economic empire, as Federalist speculators and planters. And for all the ink spilled over the political divide in the theaters of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, even theater historian Heather Nathans admits that, "Neither theater could submit a list of proprietors with exclusive allegiance to one political agenda."[82] Both "sides" were on the side of empire and expansion.

In many ways, this is a replay of the circa 1730 conflict in Britain between the Walpolean Whigs, who supported economic empire and political control by an economic elite comprised of fluid wealth, and who were reincarnated as the Federalist Party. The landed "Country" radicals who argued for a more constitutionally

[81] Elkins and McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism.*

[82] Nathans, *Early American Theater*, 107.

balanced system yet remained unopposed to and invested in empire were seen through the prism of Jeffersonian republicanism. Moreover, the concept of "center and periphery" is applicable when one includes the situation of both indigenous Americans and back-country colonists.[83] The diffused nature of those who operated independent of the empire's economic structure on the periphery of the empire had an advantage in their relatively egalitarian distribution of power – for awhile. This diffused power can be quite resilient as long as self-sufficiency is maintained. But the temptations of market society infiltrated the societies of the "periphery," disrupting their advantage and increasing their dependence. Increasingly, they were forced to shift their focus to the capitalist banking and manufacturing centers for essential items.[84] As for the working class, they were by definition part of the market societal structure and were subject to the drive to undercut prices by investors, masters, and entrepreneurs. This led to "sweating out" the simple tasks, moving away from the old guild system of training skilled craftsmen.[85] Accumulated wealth and its connections to power and societal associations had replaced King-in-Parliament,

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[83] Robert Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986).

[84] An excellent study of this is Richard White's, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[85] Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and The Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984; Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Pantheon, 1963; for a discussion of how that relates to working classes audiences attending American theater in the Federalist period, see Nathans, *Early American Theater*, 91-122.

which itself had subverted the power structure of the monarchy, aristocracy, and the church. The engine of economic empire seemed to be an ineluctable force.

Theater, for the most part, served this force – sometimes against the direction of the power brokers, but ultimately in support of the larger force of economic empire and nation-building – by rationalizing and justifying, if not whitewashing, its depredations. The high moral ground of the "Spirit of '75" was embattled and yielding to the power of libertarian economics of the Federalists and their Constitution by the 1790s. One letter from a citizen, interestingly signed "A Federalist," expressed outrage at the usurpation of power by:

> [T]hose furious zealots who are for cramming it [the Constitution] down the throats of the people without allowing them either time or opportunity to scan or weigh it in the balance of their understandings. [These individuals] bear the same marks in their features as those who have been long wishing to erect an aristocracy in THIS COMMONWEALTH . . . I had rather be a free citizen of the small republic of Massachusetts, than an oppressed subject of the great American empire . . . the Noble order of C[incinnati]s, holders of public securities, men of great wealth and expectations of public office . . . these with their train of dependents form the Aristocratick combination . . . The time draws near for the choice of Delegates. I hope my fellow-citizens will look well to the characters of their preference, and remember the Old Patriots of '75 – they have never led them astray.[86]

This letter represents the dismay of those citizens who, like the English "Country" radicals before them, did not support centralized power, economic or military. Unlike those outside the pale, without such a voice, whose lands and labors were daily usurped by the expansion of this empire, people such as "A Federalist" were often voters and had to be appeased. Indeed, they *wanted* to be appeased and theater was instrumental in that appeasement.

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[86] *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 26 November, 1787.

After the Revolution, the new nation's decidedly democratic turn was interrupted by a movement for a federal system modeled after the British King-in-Parliament system that combined the One (the President), and the Few (Congress), with the moneyed interests of the bourgeoisie. Opponents of this federal movement feared for the republic, and many of their fears were realized in the 1790s. However, whether led by the "Interests" or republican yeoman farmers, to Native Americans and slaves it made little difference – it was still an empire built with their land, labor, or both. The theater was in the very important position of providing a comforting discourse of empire for those who lived in the hinterland and attended the theater on their trips to the cities. Concerns of race and class were often combined in these performances, lightening the dark side of the empire republic, i.e., land usurpation, slavery, and racial apartheid. The economic empire of Britain had itself been usurped by the North American colonists. While the desire for agrarian democracy was deep in many quarters, economic empire gained the upper hand in the end. The theater explained these developments in comforting, romantic, even heroic – but rarely realistic – terms.

Chapter Five
Expanding a Culture of Empire: Frontier Theater from Quebec to Pittsburgh

Under the headline "On the Equestrian Pantheon," referring to John Bill Ricketts's circus in Boston in 1795, the *Columbian Centinel* referenced the same empires as the political architects of the new republic so frequently did:

> Egypt of old, the Crododile ador'd,
> Reptiles held sacred and the Bull implor'd;
> Rome's Pantheon still could boast a nobler line,
> Whose images of men were deem'd divine;
> But Boston claims the highest right by odds,
> Whose Horses fill the place of – All the Gods."[1]

Ricketts's circus gave competition to the theaters of the three large northern markets – Boston, New York, and Philadelphia – in the 1790s. Other actor-circus performers got in on the action as well. The Frenchman Alexander Placide, who also performed at the John Street Theatre with the Old American Company, had come from Astley's circus in London where he had been known as the "Great Devil" because of his tumbling abilities. Placide would balance a peacock feather in a variety of ways, or perform feats of tumbling, work the tight-rope or slack-wire and, with his wife, dance a minuet and a gavotte. Bennett, the rope dancer from London, performing in "Mr. Waldron's Long Room in St. George's Street" in New York, "danced a hornpipe on his head; sang a humorous song; and showed up the whole art of Animal Magnetism, or Mesmerism . . ." On the corner of Beekman and Gold Streets, the "Speaking Wax Figure," suspended by ribbons, would give answers to questions about the future to any paying customers.[2]

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[1] *The Columbian Centinel*, 25 July, 1795.

[2] Isaac J. Greenwood, *The Circus: Its Origin and Growth Prior to 1835* (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1898), 67-68.

These "entertainments," coming as they did in the 1790s, were the harbingers of a more mystical and irrational *zeitgeist* that supplanted the neo-classical appeals to reason characteristic of the revolutionary period. Ultimately known as "Romanticism," this *zeitgeist* included circus, melodrama, pantomime, and spectacle in the performing arts. And while it did not reach its full flowering until later in the nineteenth century, the transformation was well under way in the 1790s. What concerns the present study is the relationship between these "entertainments" and empire in early America. Many working class people drew little distinction between theater and circus, they were simply points in a continuum of popular culture.[3] Utilizing a variety of sources, including an extended comparison of the memoirs of the plebian dancer John Durang and the bourgeois actor/manager John Bernard, this chapter engages this enlarged spectrum of performance and its relationship to empire.

In the late eighteenth century North America, the newest performance genre was also one of the oldest – the circus. Plebian in its orientation to be sure, menageries and equestrian shows nevertheless have their roots in empire and militarism. In the ancient Mediterranean, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman cultures all employed some sort of circus menagerie. Queen Hatshepsut's Egyptian trading fleet to the Indian Ocean returned with "monkeys, greyhounds, oxen, a giraffe, and various kinds of birds." Ptolemy II, (309-247 B.C.E.), presented a spectacular parade of wild animals in honor of Dionysus, the Greek God who was said to have power over them. This parade, reportedly the earliest in the historical record, was led by a gold-festooned elephant, followed by more elephants, lions, goats, water buffaloes,

[3] Rupert Croft-Cooke and Peter Cotes, *Circus: A World History* (London: Elek, 1976), 47-49.

ostriches, deer, and camels. Each camel bore a female slave with exotic spices and perfumes. Ethiopian slaves loaded with ivory, ebony, gold powder, and gold and silver goblets followed behind the camels.[4] The women and slaves, the displays of exotic animals from conquered lands, and the plundered booty from those lands are a timeless characteristic of empire, one to which its opponents usually object.

The rebirth of the circus in the early modern period is usually traced to the rise of Philip Astley's public demonstrations of horsemanship in England in the eighteenth century. A retired Sergeant-Major of the Fifteenth King's Royal Regiment of Light Dragoons, (the British Imperial Army), Astley started a "riding school" that soon became the pre-eminent site of equestrian performances in London. Before he was done, Astley had performed for all the major heads of state in Europe, and trained students who would perpetuate circus performances on both sides of the Atlantic. About the same time Astley was gaining popularity, an individual by the name of Price exhibited his equestrian skills at the "3 Hats of Islington" in 1758 – a venue in central London at St. John Street, Clerkenwell (AKA Islington), and noted in Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Hypocrite*. This served as an inspiration to Thomas Johnson, known as the "Irish Tartar" for his horsemanship. The "Irish Tartar" performed with regularity, once before three Cherokee Chiefs visiting at the Star and Garter Tavern in London's Burton Street. Jacob Bates brought equestrian performances to the colonies in 1772, performing in Philadelphia and the next year in New York City. His performance included a "burlesque on horsemanship," a re-creation of Philip Astley's

[4] Marian Murray, *Circus! From Rome to Ringling* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), 31-32

popular "Billy Buttons, or the Tailor's Ride to Brentford."[5] The character "Billy Buttons" was a tailor and an inept horseman who had to ride hurriedly to Brentford in order to vote in an election. This performance included the equestrian riding backwards on the horse, seeming to fall off only to spring back on, and otherwise create a satirical performance of the non-horseman with implied overtones of male virility. After the revolution, the first American-born circus rider, Thomas Pool, announced that he would perform "numerous miraculous performances" on horseback at full speed, including tossing an orange into the air and catching it with a fork, mounting and dismounting while firing a pistol, in addition to the "Tailor's Ride." His show was assisted by a clown and several musicians.[6]

But it was the Ricketts's "Pantheon" in Philadelphia that most scholars agree represents the beginnings of established circus performances in the United States. Ricketts had been trained by Charles Hughes at the London Royal Circus that provided competition to the master British equestrian, Philip Astley. His success in establishing a circus in the United States parallels its growth in England and illustrates the close relationship between British and Euro-American imperial culture.[7] Ricketts's circus drew theater-goers away from the stock plays of the day

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[5] Greenwood, *The Circus*, 13-19; George L. Chindahl, *The History of the Circus in America* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1959), 6; R.W.G. Vail, *Random Notes on the History of the Early American Circus* (Barre, MA: Barre Gazette, 1956), 74-75.

[6] Vail, 7. There is an old fiddle tune, a hornpipe or English country dance, called "Astley's Ride" named for this phenomenon. A similar version called "Leslie's Ride" is one of three tunes in the Irish Set Dance figure "The Three Tunes." Both, and indeed the family of tunes associated with them, are alive and well in the traditional repertoire.

[7] For Astley's career, see May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling,* 7-14; Murray, *Circus!*, 79-88; A.H. Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse: A History of Hippodrama in England and France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), passim. For Charles Hughes, see Saxon, 10-12.

and thoroughly dismayed individuals like William Dunlap who already bemoaned the encroaching populism of the theater. Ricketts's arrival affected first the Southwark Theater in Philadelphia, and when he opened a circus in Greenwich Street, New York City, Dunlap's John Street Theater suffered as well. Ricketts also provided competition to theaters in Boston and Hartford, Connecticut.[8] He and John Durang, a dancer, actor, and equestrian, proved to be a memorable combination, touring Canada in 1797-98 and playing in Philadelphia through 1799.[9]

Ricketts performed with President George Washington in the audience on April 22, 1793 and again on January 24, 1797. Two days after the second performance, Washington reportedly sold him a white horse named Jack for $150.00. Ricketts advertised that Washington had "presented" him the twenty-eight year-old horse which had carried the General during at least a portion of the Revolutionary War – a claim which, naturally, translated into receipts.[10] Illustrating the hazards that performers – itinerant or sedentary – often confronted, this horse was shortly afterward confiscated by the Sheriff in Baltimore for unpaid expenses.[11] Durang noted that the horse was not purchased from Washington himself, but through Robert

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[8] William Dunlap, *History of the American Theater and Anecdotes of the Principal Actors,* in two volumes (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963, orig. pub. 1838), I: 267; Marian Murray, *Circus! From Rome to Ringling* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), 119-120).

[9] Alan S. Downer, ed., *The Memoir of John Durang, American Actor, 1785-1816* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press for the Historical Society of York County, 1966), 42-101 (hereafter referred to as *Durang Memoir*); Reese Davis James, *Cradle of Culture: The Philadelphia Stage, 1800-1810* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957); Vail, 76-80; Chindahl, 7-10; Greenwood, 63-65, 71, 75. Another version of the "Tailor's Ride" story was a satire on a fictional company of tailors during the Seven Years War, none of whom could ride a horse properly. See Greenwood, 49-50.

[10] Recounted in Vail, 76-77.

[11] *Durang Memoir*, 46.

Morris. This must have occurred before Morris's imprisonment in a Philadelphia debtor's prison which occurred that same year.[12]

By the nineteenth century, Ricketts had helped to widen the performance spectrum considerably in Euro-American society. As an advocate of "legitimate" theater, Boston-based actor and future manager John Bernard must have been aghast when one Mr. Robertson, "of the Amphitheatre, London," performed at the Federal Theatre in Boston (Bernard's residency) on Christmas Eve of 1800. Robertson:

> [G]ave imitations of the English robin, thrush, skylark, and nightingale; whistled an overture, accompanied by the band; danced an egg-hornpipe blindfolded, displayed feats of ground and lofty tumbling, threw somersaults backward and forward; and leaped through a balloon of fire fourteen feet above the stage, or over the heads of twenty soldiers with guns and fixed bayonets. He would also, in his 'Antipodean Whirligig,' whirl round on his head, without using his hands, at the rate of two hundred and fifty times in a minute, with fireworks attached to his body.[13]

Robertson also performed on the main stages in Philadelphia and New York, but his appearance in Boston underscored the wide variety of performances people were coming to expect even from the Federal Street Theater, the perceived stronghold of the Boston Brahmans.

In the Hudson Valley, at Albany between 1803 and 1808, wild animal displays, dramatic recitations, "displays of electricity," and the occasional fencing and dancing lessons were the main attractions at the Thespian Hotel and other

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[12] The young actor and future manager of the Federal Theater in Boston, William Wood, met Morris in the prison. Both men were isolated from the general population by a sympathetic jailer who was also the pit doorman at the Chestnut Street Theater; see William B. Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1855), 38-39.

[13] Isaac J. Greenwood, *The Circus: Its Origin and Growth Prior to 1835* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970; orig. pub. 1898), 85-86. Greenwood goes on to note that Mr. Robertson "eventually died in the South, having dislocated his neck, as might have been expected." Ibid., 87.

locations. In 1806, an African lion was exhibited, with the show concluding with "a grand bait to take place between the lion, six bears and twelve bull-dogs in a large field where ample accommodations will be prepared for spectators; admittance $1."[14]

Such animals were beginning to appear even on "polite" theater stages. At the Park Theater in New York on May 10, 1802, during Act II of *Alexander the Great*, two camels "just arrived from the coast of Africa" graced the stage.[15] Elephants were also in demand in the early republic. Arriving in New York in April of 1796 aboard the *America*, Captain Jacob Crowninshield brought from Bengal – another colony in the British Empire – a two-year-old elephant bull. This appears to have been the first elephant on an American stage, as the young Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, attached to the Philadelphia Theater of Thomas Wignell and Alexander Reinagle, hired the elephant from its owner, "Mr. Owen," for sixty dollars. William Dunlap lamented that:

> Those who had declined to take seats to see and support the best tragedian, [referring to Cooper], although not yet so finished as afterwards, that had yet played in America, filled the house to overflowing to see the stage dishonoured by an elephant.[16]

While Dunlap may have objected to the quadruped invasion of the bourgeois theater stage, it was a reflection of the democratizing empire that emerged in the aftermath of

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[14] Quoted in ibid., 32.

[15] Vail, *Random Notes*, 6. Vail's short work is a useful calendar of various and sundry menageries, equestrian performances, freaks, and acrobats in the colonial and early republic period. Not surprisingly, Dunlap says nothing of the camels in his *History of the American Theatre*.

[16] William Dunlap, *History of the American Theater and Anecdotes of the Principal Actors,* in two volumes (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963, orig. pub. 1838), I, 352; Earl Chapin May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963; originally published Duffield and Green, 1932), 25.

the American Revolution, and was characteristic of the expansion of empire beyond the eastern seaboard.

John Bill Ricketts and Boston Thespian John Bernard were among the early managers to bring theater to the Mahican Channel in the early republic. Before the revolution, the American Company had traveled as far as Albany, New York during the off season (summer) of 1769. But resistance to the theater was strong and only grew in the revolutionary years. Serious dramatic performance did not return to Albany until 1785, and then an off-shoot of the Old American Company of players led by a Mr. Allen had to confront serious resistance to their performances. Most of the resistance was of the printed variety in the *Albany Gazette*, but a petition was circulated in the community to ban the troupe's performances. Signed by ninety citizens, the roots of this resistance were grounded in republicanism, economics, and religion. Pro-theater arguments usually tried to make the case for theater as moral instruction and education. The authors of this petition had heard, but were not buying, that rhetoric:

> Though . . . the inhabitants are suspected of rusticity and want of politeness, they have so much common sense, we trust, as to judge and to declare that we stand in no need of plays and play-actors to be instructed in our duty or good manners, being already provided with other and much better means to obtain sufficient knowledge and improvement in both. But the pressing necessities and wants of many families, after a long continued and depressing war, the debts still due to the public for the safety and convenience of the state and this city; as well as many objects of charity (not to mention the gratitude we owe to God), call upon us to request the impartial reconsideration of your resolution by which that authority was given, and to make such amendments as are consistent with your wisdom and prudence, to acquaint your citizens that the intent and meaning thereof was not publicly to authorize and thereby to applaud and encourage theatrical exhibitions of those persons, who, having left another more populous city pretend to stay but a short time amongst us, probably to support themselves on the way to another place, where they

> expect to meet with better friends and political connections; but in reality will drain us of our money, if not instill into the minds of the imprudent principles incompatible with that virtue which is the true basis of republican liberty and happiness.[17]

In spite of the petition, the city fathers of Albany ruled that they had no legal right to prevent the presentations, an early example of libertarianism (and, by extension, economic empire), trumping republicanism in rural America. Allen and his fellow players were able to present their shows, which were the stock plays of the day – Shakespeare, Sheridan, Otway, etc., emphasizing *The London Merchant* for its morality tale – from December to February, when the ice allowed them to proceed to Montreal by sleigh. They left town having paid all their bills and exhibited model behavior; but resistance to the theater remained strong in the American backcountry.[18] Lewis Hallam, Jr.'s "Old American Company" played in Albany from August to October of 1803. This professional troupe, who came north without their theater manager William Dunlap, played many of the stock plays of the day, e.g., *Douglas*, *Inkle and Yarico*, *George Barnwell*, and *School for Scandal*. Between Allen's 1786 visit and John Bernard's arrival in 1811 as manager of the Green Street Theatre, this was the only other performance of this type in the historical record.[19]

Ricketts's tour to Canada through Albany was a departure from both the stock plays of eastern theaters and menageries beginning to circulate in the new United

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[17] Quoted in H.P. Phelps, *Players of a Century: A Record of the Albany Stage* (New York: Edgar S. Werner, 1890), 23-24. While little is known of Allen and his wife other than their employment in the Old American Company, they were the parents of "the since eccentrically distinguished Andrew Jackson Allen," a well-known actor of the nineteenth century; see Joseph Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*, two volumes, reprint (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), I:66.

[18] Ibid., 26-29. Note that the argument in support of the theater was the same one that would be used in Boston, emphasizing the audience's rights to attend the theater rather than the players' right to mount the stage. See Strand, 21.

[19] Ibid., 30.

States. Being a circus that was usually performed outdoors, the resistance from theater opponents was somewhat lessened and interaction with the locals somewhat increased. The only known account that exists of this journey is John Durang's memoir and several advertisements in Montreal and Quebec City newspapers.[20] It is useful to compare the account of Durang, an actor, dancer, equestrian, and circus clown of humble origins, with the observations of John Bernard, an English actor of bourgeois origins and aspirations who made a similar tour some twelve years after Ricketts and During. The narratives of these two former co-workers at Philadelphia's Chestnut Theater provide insight into the spectrum of social classes that participated in theatrical productions of all kinds. Moreover, these two narratives represent the early stages of a white egalitarianism in the early republic underscoring the presence of an "untouchable" (to many) non-white "underclass."

Durang was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1768, the son of immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine – his father was French and served in the army in the Seven Years War, his mother was from the German side. They had only recently arrived in the New World, at Philadelphia in November of 1767. His father Jacob was a barber and they soon settled in York, Pennsylvania (Durang refers to it as "little York"), where John grew up and to where he would return. French and German as well as English were spoken in the Durang household and the language skills thus obtained would serve the younger Durang well in his travels, both to Canada with Ricketts, and in his own endeavors in the Pennsylvania "Dutch" backcountry.[21]

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[20] See James S. Moy, 'The First Circus in Eastern Canada," Theatre Research in Canada, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1980), 12-23. For a broader view, see Moy, "John B. Ricketts' Circus, 1793-1800," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Illinois at Urbana, 1977).

[21] *Durang Memoir*, 4.

Durang became interested in the theater as a child when he attended seasonal fairs and the "harvest frolic" that always brought a wide variety of entertainments and an expanded market place. Fiddles and dancing, "showfolks with their signs out, hand organs and trumpits to invite the people to see poppet shows, wire dancing, slight of hand," provided a welcome diversion from the routine of small town life. But Durang recognized the hazards of such events, and his small-town cautiousness held him in good stead when he became a showman himself. "The greatest evil," he wrote, "is a cohesion of gamblers who infest the country towns at the time of fairs, harvest frolics, and at the races . . . And yet those very gamesters make the appearance of good morel *[sic]* citizens when they walk the streets of our capital cities."[22]

The revolution came to York, of course, and Durang was impressed by the British officers who boarded at their house and played their music almost nightly to the great delight of all concerned. Jacob Durang moved his family to Philadelphia after the British left that city, and John reported being impressed with the fireworks shows put on by Sieur Gerard, the first French Ambassador to the new nation. Sieur Gerard also impressed the Durangs and other Americans by the fact that "[h]e seldom wrode in his carriage, but walk'd our streets like a plain American citizen. Numbers of poor families were supported from his house and table." And young John saw his first pantomime, performed by le Sieur's household domestics in the Southwark Theater.[23]

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[22] Ibid., 5-6.

[23] Ibid., 8, misspellings in the original.

The traveling company of Wall and Ryan arrived at the Southwark theater in 1783 from Baltimore and it was then that Durang first saw someone, a Mr. Roussel, dance a hornpipe which, Durang reported, "charmed my mind." He talked the dancer into boarding at his father's house and learned much from him during his stay. Having mastered the hornpipe and the allemande, he struggled with the pigeon wing (a dance step executed by jumping into the air and clapping the legs together). One night in a dream he found himself dancing the dance perfectly, and upon awakening found he could not only execute the dance flawlessly, but could quickly teach it to anyone who wanted to learn it. At age fifteen, Lewis Hallam of the Old American Company, saw Durang dancing at a private engagement and asked him to audition for the company as a dancer. Hallam hired Durang for a brief stint in Boston, where he had the valuable experience of making money doing what he loved to do. His newfound vocation would one day earn him the title of the "Greatest Dancer in America."[24]

In 1793, Durang joined the Old American Company in Philadelphia and moved with them to John Street Theater in New York under Dunlap. In 1795, John Bill Ricketts was performing at the Greenwich Street Theater in New York. He sent a note and an offer of twenty-five dollars a week every week plus a benefit in every town if Durang would join his circus, an offer Durang accepted in spite of Dunlap's offer to raise his salary. Thus began an odyssey that would ultimately make Durang

[24] Ibid., 16-17.

an autonomous player in the United States and Canada – one of the early backcountry touring actors in the new nation.[25]

Now a seasoned performer, in 1797 Durang left with Ricketts on the journey north to Canada. Ricketts the equestrian, with Dunlap the dancer, actor, and clown, along with a Mr. Leulier, a musician, six horses and a supporting cast, sailed up the Hudson River to Albany on July 19. Travel was difficult, but the river was tidal as far as Albany, and even if the boats (there was a small flotilla of a variety of travelers) snagged on sand bars, the tide would free them eventually. Durang had a favorable view of the town at first, but it began to fade as the "people were unsociable and the town dull." There was still a large percentage of Dutch in this town of six churches and a great many taverns "without custom except from strangers," and upwards of ten stagecoaches a day leaving the river town for outlying villages. Their first performance was July 31, about a week after they first arrived. The circus grossed one hundred and sixty dollars that evening, with most of the crowd remaining outside and boring holes in the planks to peep through. A fire consumed much of the town on August 5, which seemingly put an end to the circus in Albany. Durang suggested that they give benefits for the victims of the fire, after which they could take benefits for themselves, an idea which met with success all around.

The company left Albany on August 14 and began the arduous journey to Montreal. Durang's account is a workman-like account; an unpretentious relation with numerous anecdotes including commentary on the abject poverty of the rural families. For example, shoes were considered a luxury for many, traveling five or six

[25] Ibid., 42-43.

miles for basic items like flour. These rural folk were not a source of material for bourgeois parlor monologues for Durang as they would be for John Bernard. Durang was among people to whom he could relate. When they stopped in Fairhaven, for example, at the south end of Lake Champlain, they asked for a good breakfast with some poultry. The local landlord had none other than turkeys running in the field. All agreed to try and catch one and, with the help of a couple of local youths, they managed to chase a flock into the main street of the town, where one was captured. Ricketts himself took on the job of preparing the meal with the assistance of the landlady in her kitchen. The troupers rotated particular tasks and it was his turn that day to be the "valet" when, Durang reported, "everything was done to please us." After relating this story, Durang wrote that "upon the whole they did not know what to make of us, as we never reveal'd our occupation, but when necessary."[26] Again, as will be seen with Bernard's later narrative, Durang made no jokes at the expense of their Yankee hosts, nor patronizing comments about their rusticity; only gratitude for the assistance the company received and pity for those who endured the wretched conditions so common in the backcountry. The intent here is not to paint a romantic picture of the equestrians, they were certainly eager to help the "Yankeys" or the Canadians part with their all-too-scarce cash. This endeavor was, after all, part and parcel of the Atlantic market economy, and represented entrepreneurial capitalism in the field of entertainment. Yet the performers, as proud as they may have been of their skills, did not consider their audiences on a decidedly lower echelon of society as did actors of a bourgeois inclination like John Bernard and others.

[26] Ibid., 54.

There were a number of stops for Ricketts' entourage at small houses and, in one case, a two-room cabin with a family and "six or eight reapers [who] came in the other room, men and women . . . After eating something, [they] made a regemental *[sic]* bed with buffalo skins on the floor, and all lay down to sleep in sight of us." Durang and Ricketts laid awake the whole night, partly because of the captain's unwillingness "to prevent natures report . . . being the signals of wind. [But] Upon the whole this was a scene of rustic simplicity."[27]

On the twenty-fifth of August, the group arrived in Montreal, and found lodgings at an inn kept by one Simon Clark, a New Englander who had moved to Canada during the Revolution and worked as an interpreter to the Indians for the British. Theater had been a part of the imperial culture of British occupation in lower Canada since the end of the French-Indian War. Previously, students at Montreal College had presented French plays to unisex audiences. In the 1780s, one William Moore began managing a small theatrical company that presented stock English plays to Montreal and Quebec subscribers and a limited number of the general public. But for the most part, amateur companies staged the plays that did appear, with men playing the female parts because of the Church's interdiction of females on the stage. Aside from the occasional performances by bored officers in the garrison, that was the extent of the Canadian theater scene in the late 1790s.[28]

Ricketts secured some of the "King's land" for a circus grounds, constructed a ring, a stage, dressing room, and stables, and on September 5, the company opened.

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[27] Ibid., 66. A regimental bed is another way of saying "slept on the floor."

[28] Hilda Neatby, *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age, 1760-1791* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1966), 230.

The show went on every afternoon at four o'clock with music from the 60th Regimental band of the Royal American Grenadiers. While Ricketts – "the best that ever was in America" – handled the horses, Durang:

> [W]as the Clown on foot and horseback, and obliged to furnish all the jokes for the ring, and to ride the Tailor to Brentford, with the dialogue which I was obliged to speak in French, German, and English (the principle inhabitants are French, a great many Germans, a few merchants, and British solders English).
>
> I rode the foxhunter, leaping over the bar with the mounting and dismounting while in full speed, taking a flying leap on horseback through a paper sun, in character of a drunken man on horseback, tied to a sack standing on two horses while I changed to woman's clothes; rode in full speed standing on two horses, Mr. Ricketts at the same time standing on my shoulders, with master Hutchins at the same time standing in the attitude of Mercury on Mr. Ricketts' shoulders forming a pyramid. I performed the drunken soldier on horseback, still vaulted, I dancet *[sic]* on the stage, I was the Harlequin in the pantomimes, occasionally I sung a comic song. I tumbled on the slack rope and performed on the slack wire. I introduced mechanical exhibitions in machinery and transparencies, I produced exhibitions of fireworks. In short, I was performer, machinist, painter, designer, music compiler, the bill maker, and treasurer.

Again, this represents a significant contrast to the Bernard tour described below. Durang and Ricketts were of a yeoman mindset; which is to say, if something needed to be done, they did not wait until someone from the working class showed up, they did it themselves.

Because they were the first "circus" to visit colonial Canada, many of the audience apparently thought their horses were supernatural. Ricketts and Durang could both dance a hornpipe on the saddle of a horse galloping at full speed and the audience wanted to know how the horses galloped in time with the music. The musicians were, of course, playing the music to the beat of the horses' stride. When

the crowd was "convincet *[sic]* that we are like other people," they were "much pleased with us."[29]

But the Canada experience was only just beginning. Ricketts and Durang decided to winter in Montreal and began constructing a proper circus building. Using native stones as walls and the Southwark Theater as a model, the company constructed a room big enough for their equestrian exhibitions. The theater included a stage for plays, boxes, a pit, a dome with skylights, a coffeehouse, a waiting room, and dressing rooms. Durang painted the dome light blue with cupids bearing rose garlands around the circle. With a festooned blue curtain, scenery, a frontispiece, stage doors, each with a niche with "busts of armory," the company performed the pantomimes *Death of Captain Cook, Robinson Crusoe*, various Harlequin pantomimes, and ballet dances; not to mention the usual equestrian feats.[30]

In the Fall of 1797, Ricketts and Durang visited the Indian village of Caughnawaga about ten miles southwest of Montreal. Ricketts dressed in "Indian attire" that he sometimes used as riding clothes. "Captain Tommoa, an old Indian warrior of 76" was their host. The visitors dined on beans and hominy, Durang's first taste of Indian corn. A group of the villagers, who could converse with the visitors

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[29] Ibid., 67-69. For a concise summation of the entertainments offered at Ricketts's circus, see James S. Moy, "Entertainments at John B. Ricketts's Circus, 1793-1800," *Educational Theatre Journal* 30:2 (May 1978), 186-202. For a more thorough treatment of Ricketts's performances in Montreal and Quebec City, see Moy, "First Circus," passim. Moy makes extensive use of the only other known sources of this journey, the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Quebec Gazette*.

[30] Ibid., 69-70. At this point, Caughnawaga was a multi-ethnic community populated by what some referred to as the "Seven Nations of Canada," groups of Indians that had congregated missions along the St. Lawrence River as refugees, essentially. These included the Oka, Odanek, Akwasasne and other groups. See Colin G. Calloway, ed., *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1994), 183, n.3. See my brief discussion outlining the historical context of the Caughnawaga in Chapter Three.

only in French, performed a dance for them. Durang's account of the event is interesting in its attention detail that only a "fellow dancer" might record. The dance was performed:

> [W]ith a most reserved modesty, by couples behind each other. They moved on slow with only one simple step, something of the clesade [glissade], their countenance an innocent *[sic]* down look, quite erect in their whole person, their arms strait down by the side, all keeping an exact time to their music, which was play'd by an old chief beating one stick against the other [in lieu of a drum; the fact that they did not have one may be commentary on the decimated state of their culture at the time] . . . Those girls would move in Indian file and strait line to right and left and meet again, then lead off to right and left in Indian file, round and meet at the bottom and join their pardners *[sic]* as before, with a repeat of the same, gracefully. They did not fling their arms and legs about as I have seen ladies do at our balls.[31]

At his benefit a few days later, borrowing a few "Indian clothes" from Northwest Company traders and utilizing a native outfit he had purchased from the Indians for rum, Durang imitated some these Indian dances. In this performance, one finds a combination of one folk culture identifying with another on the one hand, and on the other a representation of empire in a Euro-American view of indigenous peoples. Durang danced a "Pipe Dance, an "Eagle Tail Dance," and a "War Dance," which he had learned from the Caughnawaga. But he enhanced the performance with some improvised "postures . . . representing the manner they kill and scalp and take prisoners with the yells and war hoops."[32] While Durang was willing to socialize with and learn from the Indians, taking what they taught him onto the stage in his own act, the inclusion of warrior stereotypes was a blatant expression of imperial

[31] Ibid., 71-72.

[32] Ibid., 79-80.

culture and worked to justify Euro-American atrocities against them. This presages the blackface and "redface" performances that would become popular in the 1830s, underscoring the fact that one did not have to wait for the Jacksonian period for such populist, folk-influenced performances.

Nevertheless, it is relatively rare to find an observation of Indian culture written by whites, especially Euro-Americans, in this period that does not judge them negatively. As a Euro-American populist performer in the early republic, Durang's attitude towards the Caughnawaga was likely not without an element of condescension. But as it comes across in his memoir, he did not blatantly champion or display a sense of superiority. The only negative comment Durang offered regarding the Indians in his memoir – aside from perpetuating the "scalping" and "war whoop" stereotype – was his recollection of an "Indian frolic." After selling their furs and game in Montreal, the men would engage in drunken and often violent behavior while the women hid themselves and the children from the onslaught. Nevertheless, Durang's attitude towards the Indians, as well as the Canadians and Vermonters, was certainly more sympathetic than anything found in the writings of Bernard and his circle.

Soon after this event, Durang suffered an injury when his horse's hooves hit a slick spot where the roof had leaked and the horse fell on Durang's leg. He was not seriously injured – he danced a hornpipe immediately afterward to demonstrate to the crowd that was unhurt – but his leg swelled overnight and he was bed-ridden for three days. "An old French doctor lady" applied her medicine and cured him. Though he does not state her cure for a swollen leg, he does mention that she cured a woman of

breast cancer "by applying live toads to the part affected. They sucked the poisoness *[sic]* inflammation from the breast and cured her."[33] Whether this was French, Breton, or Algonkian folklore at work is unknown.

Unfortunately, the Canadian tour ended on a sour note when, on the return trip through Montreal, non-paying observers crowded the roof and would not leave. Hutchins, the horse groom, fired a shotgun loaded with peas into the crowd and put out a young man's eye. The company had to hustle Hutchins into hiding and secret him out of the country to keep him from being killed. A lawsuit ensued, and it cost Ricketts eight hundred dollars to leave the affair behind them.[34]

Within the context of empire, Ricketts and Durang represented performances of a democratizing version of empire. Their particular brand of performance did not shy away from non-Anglo audiences and relied more on physical prowess than on subtlety of plot. One of Durang's more curious performances was when he began a hornpipe dress as a midget with a giant turban and during the dance transformed into a the character of a full-sized black woman in a dress. So there were elements of blackface pantomime as well as the redface performance described above. The story lines of the pantomimes they performed were narratives of imperial conquest that would appeal to those engaged in such activities. But theirs was a plebian milieu, and therefore had a different character than the bourgeois performances more typical of the New York and Philadelphia stages that were (usually) their competition.

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[33] Ibid., 77.

[34] Ibid., 88.

After returning to the U.S., Durang joined the Philadelphia Company of players under Thomas Wignell, touring to Annapolis and Baltimore on the company's usual circuit. Ricketts eventually left America for the West Indies with his horses and the remainder of their company, including his brother Francis and Hutchins, the old groom. Another conflict between the French and British meant that both sides were pressuring Americans to give up their neutrality, disrespecting their sovereignty, and seizing their ships. The ship bearing Ricketts to the Caribbean was seized by a French privateer. Astutely, Hutchins hid Ricketts favorite silver mounted broadsword and pistols beneath the horse manure. The horses and lumber that Ricketts had brought to construct a circus in the West Indies were purchased by a merchant in Guadalupe who knew their rightful owner and returned them. Ricketts's circus was a success in the West Indies; brother Francis married and, after a brief stint in jail, returned to America. The final word on J.B. Ricketts was that he sold his building and horses at great profit, elected to return to England, but his ship foundered in route and all were lost at sea.[35]

As for Durang, he turned to the Pennsylvania Dutch backcountry as a provider of theatrical performances. His journal has brief notes on his performances at Lancaster, Fredericktown, Hagerstown, Hanover, Carlisle, Chambersburg and elsewhere during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. Employing family members and other players, Durang carried on much as he had during his trip to Canada with Ricketts. Displays of horsemanship combined with pantomimes, farces, and even some Shakespeare delivered in German were Durang's stock-in-trade until

[35] Ibid., 103.

he died in 1822.[36] His approach to the theater, while not that of most so-called "legitimate" actors, was that of a journeyman. He had a trade as a dancer, horseman, actor, and all around show-person. From building sets to constructing buildings for their performances to painting scenery or even pursuing sustenance for the table, Durang was a yeoman-mechanic, a working man with a cosmopolitan background.

John Bernard shared the cosmopolitan background, but not the yeoman-mechanic outlook; his was a bourgeois worldview of hierarchy and deference that saw British drama – and his place in it – as the acme of the civilized arts. Bernard was born at Portsmouth, England in 1756, the son of a lieutenant in the Royal navy. He began acting before the age of sixteen but apparently was taken out of that profession and placed into the navy by his father.[37] When the father found that his son was aboard a man-of-war, he had him apprenticed to a solicitor.[38] But by 1773, Bernard found his way back to the stage, where he would remain and gain approbation and respect from his peers for upwards of a half century. He married Mrs. Cooper in 1774, and they both joined the acting company in Bath, the best outside of London. Engaging the stock roles of the bourgeois stage, he traveled to Ireland, where he worked with the renowned John Kemble in Smock Alley. Bernard then went to London in 1787 and, with his quick wit and acerbic tongue, quickly became one of the celebrated personalities there. As secretary of the famous Beefsteak Club, which had included such notables as William Hogarth, David

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[36] Ibid., 127-142.

[37] Laurence Hutton and Brander Matthews, "Introduction," in John Bernard, *Retrospections of America, 1797-1811*, Mrs. Bayle Bernard, ed. (New York: Harper and Bros, 1887; reprint, Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1986), iii.

[38] Dunlap, *History*, I, 352.

Garrick, and John Wilkes as members, he became a leading wit and man about town. Judging by the company he kept, his political views were of a "Whiggish" inclination. Hired by Thomas Wignell of the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia in 1797, he traveled to America with his second wife, the former Miss Fisher, an actress who died after ten years in the New World. Bernard first played in the United States at the Greenwich Theater in New York, where the Philadelphia Company had set up in the summer off-season. He eventually found a home in Boston at the Federal Street Theater, but he played in other locales and even toured the South, the Ohio Valley, and Vermont in addition to Canada. He eventually returned to England in 1819, where he died in 1828.[39]

Bernard was reportedly strongest on the stage in comedy, and his *Retrospections* reveals his sharp wit and intelligence as well as a penchant for "improving" his memory as a story progressed. If Dunlap's recollection of Bernard is any indication, the latter's ability to produce a comic story extemporaneously was one of his trademarks – indeed, it seemed to be expected of him. An example that might serve well appears in Dunlap's reflection of a story Bernard told of a tour from his days in Ireland. Entering into a converted barn in the village of Mallow, between Cork and Limerick, Bernard claimed that he and his companions were met with the following scene and conversation upon entering:

> A conversation . . . was going on between the gallery and the orchestra, the latter composed of a performer on the violin and one on the big drum.
> "Mr. Patrick Moriarty" shouted the combiner of horse-hair and catgut, "how are you, my jewel?"
> "Aisy and impudent, Teddy O'Hoone; how are you? How's your sow?"

[39] Hutton and Matthews, "Introduction," iv-vi.

> "Mischievous and tender like all her sex. What tune would it plase you to have, Mr. Patrick Moriarty?"
> Mr. Patrick was indifferent, and referred the matter to a committee of females. In the mean time, Teddy began to tune up, at which another of his "divine" companions above assailed him:
> "Arra! Teddy O'Hoone! Teddy, you divil"
> "What do you say, Larry Kennedy?
> "Tip us a tune on your fiddle-dee-de, and don't stand there making the cratcher squake like a hog in a holly-bush. Paddy Byrne" (to the drummer).
> "What do you say, Mr. Kennedy?"
> "Ain't you a jewel now to be sitting there at your aise, when here's a whole cockloft full of jontlemen come to hear you thump you big bit of cowhide on the top of a butter tub."[40]

This presence of this "conversation" in Dunlap's memoir, recounting a story told to him by Bernard, is revealing on several levels. First, it indicates the kind of stories that were brought from real life to the stage as satire, in this case on the Irish, who became the butt of the humor and demonstrated a perceived inferiority that justified whatever mistreatment they were experiencing at the hands of the British or Anglo-Americans. Second, one can see the storytelling style of John Bernard, and his ability to utilize this satire. This sort of approach would have been most humorous to the more genteel members of the audience but, more importantly, it perpetuates a stereotype. In this stereotyping of other-than-American characters, it was not essential to provide any noble characteristics although, as has been demonstrated, attributing a rustic republicanism to the Irish was not infrequent, particularly among the more democratic-minded. Bernard's storytelling indicates a more elitist bent. That Dunlap recalled this story nearly forty years later indicates the impact such stories had and continue to have on the human psyche. The stereotype replaces the

[40] Dunlap, *History*, I, 357. I have kept the misspellings from the original, but created a new line when the speaker changes.

person at some level, and the stereotype becomes beloved, perhaps for its quaintness, perhaps for its humor, perhaps to perpetuate a class or ethnic caste. Certainly, the stereotype was employed for its ability to draw an audience to the theater. Here the bourgeois audience of the "boxes" that Bernard preferred saw its perceived superiority reflected in the class and ethnic stereotypes of the stage.

Bernard's view "Yankees," for example, reveals the mythic dimensions, encouraged by Bernard at every turn, of the Yankee character first seen in Royall Tyler's "Jonathan." The Yankee, Bernard observed, was a "man of the lower orders, sometimes a farmer, more often a mechanic (the very spirit of mechanism embodied), and yet more usually a traveling salesman." Calling him the "Yorkshireman of America," he attributes to him the same "cunning, calculating, persevering personage, with an infusion of Scotch hardiness and love of wandering." It would be inappropriate, Bernard observes, to refer to Bostonians who move in "the respectable circle," (his patrons), as Yankees. A curious class of "Down-Easter," can be seen in three "species – the swapper, the jobber, and the peddler, all agreeing in one grand characteristic – love of prey – but varying in many striking particulars."[41]

The "swapper," Bernard tells us, is the only sedentary member of the "tribe," whose key to El Dorado is neither "buying, nor selling, nor growing, nor manufacturing," but exchange. This phenomenon "shows itself in childhood, when the infant swaps its milk for marbles; and at school, when the boy swaps everything but floggings." All worldly possessions are part of the swapping pool, and the means becomes the end. "If poor, he exchanges to become rich; if rich, to become poor; till,

[41] Bernard, *Retrospections*, 37.

having swapped wealth for want, ease for anxiety, and youth for age, he at last swaps this world for the next."[42]

Bernard continues in this vein for several pages, at which point he comes to the "jobber":

> A jobber is generally a red-faced, yellow-haired man, with light-blue eyes and a capacious mouth, dressed in a nankeen suit which was made for him when a lad, and from whose expressive restrictions his republican frame is now freeing itself at back, elbows, and waistband.

This image is one that, by the time Bernard wrote it and certainly by the time his words were published, had become so entrenched in the American psyche that many had forgotten from whence it came.[43] Bernard goes on to describe the jobber in terms that would sound familiar to twenty-first century ears as a "handyman" or "jack-of-all-trades."

But the most influential of the Yankee characters, because of his penchant for roaming, Bernard tells us, is the "peddler." This individual:

> "has no inventive ingenuity, save in the art of puffing, and . . . not the slightest taste for swapping . . . To buy cheap and sell high comprehends for him the whole cycle of human knowledge; the supreme excellence of north-country stuffs is his religion; and science has taught him to believe that the world itself would not go round but to the tick of a New England clock. The same spirit which carried his ancestors into the backwoods with their train of teams and children sends him every spring on a voyage of discovery to the South. This visit is regarded by the Southern trader in the light of a visitations . . . he ranks him in the list of plagues next to the yellow fever, and before locusts, taxation, and a wet spring; indeed, some go so far as to suppose that a shower of Yankees was the crowning pestilence which made Pharoah give up the Israelites.[44]

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[42] Ibid., 38-39.

[43] Ibid., 41.

[44] Ibid., 42.

After several pages of narrative of this sort, Bernard observes that, for the Yankee, "swindling is still his talent, his stimulus, and local distinction." And to illustrate the point, Virginians point out that no Jews reside in New England, "the competition being too great for them to exist."[45] The impact of Bernard's Yankees should not be underestimated. This memoir was written after Bernard's return to England and completed about a year before his death in 1828. His son, W. Bayle Bernard, whose wife compiled the memoir for publication in 1887, was also an actor, but later in life turned to the pen and wrote a number of plays including *Rip Van Winkle* and others that featured a central role for the stage Yankee. It is hard to imagine that he was not influenced by his father's tales from the elder's days in America. The two late-nineteenth-century theater historian-critics, both well-regarded, who edited Bernard's memoir felt that Bayle Bernard deserved to be considered, (with Royall Tyler and others), among the inventors of the stage Yankee – a stock character in nineteenth century theater.[46] It is the imagery of Brother Jonathan that is transformed during the Civil War into that of Uncle Sam, its origins subsumed in the collective psyche by the twentieth century.[47]

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[45] Ibid., 45.

[46] Lauren Hutton and Brander Matthews, "Introduction," in ibid., vi. Bernard the younger wrote for, among others, James Hackett and George Handel "Yankee" Hill, actors who brought the stage Yankee to a new level of popularity during the Jacksonian era.

[47] The best discussions of the Yankee in American consciousness, in my view, are Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1931; reprint, Doubleday – Anchor, 1953), 15-36. See also Winifred Morgan, *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988); Francis Hodge, *Yankee Theater: The Image of America on the Stage, 1825-1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964).

But Yankees were not the only subject that deftly sailed off of Bernard's acerbic tongue. While recalling his uncomfortable coach ride from Rutland, (in western Massachusetts), to Whitehall, (on the south end of Lake Champlain), on the way to Canada, Bernard recounted the perceived ethnic qualities of the driver:

> Our driver was an odd compound of Yankee, Vermonter, and Hollander; he had the small, gray, twinkling eye, and the twang and humor of the first; the "do-as-I-please" physiognomy, and much of the honest principle of the second; while his clumsy, rotund, ungenteel figure and quiet, dilatory, methodical manners were decidedly Dutch.[48]

Indeed, the "plebian antics" encountered on his Canadian tour were the primary subject in his recounting of that summer. At Whitehall, southern end of the ferry route across Lake Champlain, he encountered quite a diverse assemblage of westerners – farmers, tradesmen bound for a new town, merchants seeking speculations, and "people of fortune – all sitting down at the *table d'hôte* for a feast of fish and fowl." Bernard's account of the event provides an exemplary view of his storytelling skills, and how his view of class colors those stories:

> Then suddenly arose the glitter and the clash of steel, every man seizing his knife and fork as determinedly as he might a sword and spear, and, thus armed, giving "a note of preparation" by sharpening the former, then drawing it over the ball of the thumb to ascertain its precise edge, then holding it up in a variety of positions as if practicing some particular mode of assault, and finally exclaiming with satisfaction, "it's plaguy good stuff!" But a noise is heard in the passage, and every eye turns to the door. It opens, and in marches the fat landlady, with a score of blacks after her, bearing the consumables. No sooner were they on the table than the onslaught commenced in all quarters, and a more terrific thing of the sort I never witnessed. Such hacking and hewing, cutting and thrusting, breaking, joint-dividing, winging and legging of geese and turkeys, such slicing and sawing of beef and mutton, such

[48] Ibid., 346-347. The following account of Bernard's tour is taken from his *Retrospections of America*, 346-364.

> harpooning of fish and spiking of vegetables, could hardly be imagined, much less described.

Bernard's mingling with the plebes was a liking he attributed "chiefly to my profession." At home, those who frequent the boxes were preferable, but while abroad, "a proportion of the pit and gallery are no less desirable." And while Bernard *mingled* with the plebes, Ricketts and Durang *were* plebes, but no less cosmopolitan than Bernard and perhaps more so.

When the Bernard party arrived in St. John's, they took a stage coach to La Prairie on the St. Lawrence River. Bernard describes "The rugged Galli-Canadian who drove it was also a singular combination of the savage and the Frenchman, the former, however, so predominating that nothing was discernible of the latter but the dialect." When the passengers grew concerned that they would be dumped into one of the sloughs the pilot had to navigate, Bernard's tale is once again flavored by an ethnic characterization reflecting his propensity to intertwine race and class:

> Why, Diable! What is de matter? Why was you 'fraid eh? Of dat littel *[sic]* pool! I've been in dat little pool von hundered times, and I vas no scare. You tink dere is daansher! *Eh bien*, dere vas no daansher even if de coach overturn, or de vater rone into de coach. Is not dem little hos to pool you out? Vhy vas I have do hos but to pool you out, when I drive you into de deesh! *En verité*, I tell you, so long I can see de tail of de little hos I never tink dere is no daansher at all!

Like Durang and Ricketts, Bernard also visited the Cognawagha Indian village near Montreal. His account is strikingly different, however: "It was . . . pleasing . . . to see the savage, under the influence of order and instruction, rising up towards the level of the white, and improving equally in externals and in intellect." The Indians' communal use of horses struck Bernard as amusing. "This may be a very good practice in Conawagha *[sic]*, thought I," he wrote, "but I doubt how it

would be found to work in any other part of the world."[49] Needless to say, the social event that characterized the circus performers' visit was not forthcoming with Bernard and Co.

When John Bernard arrived in Montreal, he learned that actor/managers John Mills and Mr. and Mrs. Luke Usher had established a working theater there (the Ushers had procured an establishment in Quebec City as well). All of these individuals were known by Bernard and were there, Bernard writes, in anticipation of his own plan to develop a summer circuit in Canada when the lease expired on the Boston theater. Bernard deemed them both beneath him in the social pecking order and he made no bones about it in his memoir. When John Mills' benefit night left something to be desired, Bernard wrote that Mills "was obliged to come to me with a stooping neck" to ask him to play in his benefit night. Bernard did, and it got Mills "more money than had been in the house altogether on the previous evening." Bernard himself, in a bit of seemingly feigned humility, states that it was due more to the wretched state of the company than to his presence. But what Bernard does not say in his memoir is that Mills and the Ushers had been playing successfully in Montreal and Quebec for two years before he arrived, although he does concede that the Ushers had "obtain[ed] the Quebec house . . . for five years."[50] After two years of a fairly steady diet of the same company, it is reasonable to assume that a new face on

[49] Bernard, *Retrospective*, 355-356. Franklin Graham, *Histrionic Montreal: Annals of the Montreal Stage with Biographical and Critial Notices of the Plays and Players of a Century*, reprint (New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1969; orig. pub. 1902), 24, 30.

[50] Ibid., 354-356.

the stage, one with a reputation from Boston and England, would attract a larger audience.[51]

Bernard immediately continued on to Quebec City and after some delay, received assistance from the British commandant at Trois Rivieres in gaining the provincial capital. Once there, one Colonel Pye, the head of the Amateur Association in Quebec, took in the Bernards and helped him in presenting his bill for lectures to the governor, Sir James Craig. Luke Usher's wife, who because of her gender or her acting skills or both, seems to have been held by Bernard in somewhat higher esteem than her husband, was leading a company in this town. Bernard was welcomed into the company for six nights including a benefit. While he seems to have been treated quite graciously, he refers to the "paltry little room of a very paltry public-house, that neither in shape nor capacity merited the name of theatre, my benefit receipted £95, besides ten guineas which Governor Craig sent me for his ticket." The construction of a new theater, he told his hosts, was necessary if he was to return. Colonel Pye offered some property for a theater if Bernard would enter into partnership with Mr. Usher, but "as this lady had no other claim to such a privilege than her simple merits as an actress, I declined the proposal." She, too, in the end, was too far down the bourgeois pecking order for Bernard. And while the "best families" of Montreal had offered him a proposal for a theater much more to his liking, a letter from Boston telling of his Boston partner Dickinson's return from England and subsequent desire

[51] See the issues of the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Quebec Gazette*, and the *Canadian Courant and Montreal Advisor* from 25 February, 1808 and 4 June, 1810.

to begin the season there convinced Bernard to return to Massachusetts after his only tour to Canada.

Some of Bernard's observations from his journey to the South are emblematic of the bourgeois assumptions of race and class in the early republic. The actor spent the summer of 1799 between Richmond and Norfolk, enjoying various excursions "at the invitation of that truly hospitable race – the planters." "No class of persons," Bernard wrote, "has been so harshly judged as the planters, the sins of the fathers having been visited upon the tenth generation." He seems genuinely nonplussed as to how "worthy persons whose hearts throw a mist round their brains have confounded the necessity of the present with the evil of the past." The planters, he argues, have been among the greatest victims of this system of slavery. It is not their fault if they were born into "an indisposable legacy." The heart of this apologetica is contained in the following:

> I do not remember a single instance of a planter defending the origin of his possessions, or one who defended the continuance of slavery by other than this single argument; that human agency is required in the cultivation of the Southern soil, wile the extreme heat is not to be supported save by Africans or natives. The negro, if manumitted and paid for his labor, can live upon so little that he would not do half that is required; and, till the country becomes so populated that work shall become scarce, the white will never take his place.

This benevolent, educated, and civilized race, (the planters), had but one check on the profound temptation embedded in the absence of restraint, (i.e., their human property had no legal rights or recourse for wrongs done them, indeed, as property, no wrongs *could* be done them, hence the temptation): their "goodness of heart."[52]

[52] Bernard, *Retrospections*, 146-147.

As for the slaves themselves, condescension dominates Bernard's discourse on the unfortunate group, his references to their speech presage the "nigger dialect" of the minstrel show, and unambiguously establish them as inferior. And like the blackface minstrels that would dominate the American stage in mid-century, Bernard's stories do give African-Americans credit, sometimes a lot of credit, for their tenacity and cleverness. One story he relates in his memoir describes an exchange in Charleston, South Carolina between a free black accused of stealing – the goods were in his possession – and a judge:

> Defendant: Massa Justiss, me know me got dem ting from Tom dere, and me tink Tom teal um, too; but what a dat? Dey be only a pickaninny corkscrew and pickaninny knife; one cost suspence and tudder shillin'; and me pay Tom honestly for um.
> Judge: A pretty story, truly. You knew they were stolen, yet you allege as an excuse that you honestly paid for them. I'll teach you better law than that, Caesar. Don't you know that the receiver of stolen goods is as bad as the thief? You must be whipped, you black rascal!
> Defendant: Berry well, massa, if the black rascal be whip for buying stolen goods, me hope de white rascal be whip, too, for doin' same ting when massa catch him.
> Judge:To be sure he shall. I myself will see the punishment inflicted.
> Defendant: Well, den, here be Tom's massa; hole him fast, cons'able! He buy Tom as me buy pickaninny knife and corkscrew; he know berry well dat Tom be stole from him poor fader and modder; now knife and corkscrew hab neider!

The judge, Bernard asserts, dismissed the charge. Whether true or not, this racial construction represents the early stages of working out on the theater stage the cognitive dissonance inherent in pairing up the ideals of the American Revolution and the institution of slavery.[53] *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Inkle and Yarico*, and *The Padlock*

[53] Ibid., 227-228. For a somewhat dated discussion of white depictions of African Americans in the theater of this period see, for example, Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), esp. Chapter 1; for a discussion of "Negro" dialects on the stage, see William J. Mahar, "Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A New

were all plays that contained "swarthy" characters performed in blackface and with which the stock actor would have been familiar during these years. Bernard's depiction of African Americans in his narrative reflects his penchant for "speaking" from the stage, whether he is on it or not. In any case, Bernard's influence as a popular stock actor and manager on the myth-making of the early American stage is significant. This influence was particularly acute through the impact on his playwright son of his views and tales of the "Yankee," as well as through the impact he had on bourgeois society via his gregarious parlor monologues.

So Durang and Bernard, who frequented some of the same theater stages, occasionally at the same time, represent a stark contrast between what historians might politicize as "Feds" and "Antis." But the politicization masks a deeper level of reality that says at least as much and maybe more about what was really happening than the newspapers or the Congressional Record. Like Thomas Morton in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, John Durang and J.B. Ricketts represent, on the one hand, the path not taken, i.e., establishing relatively egalitarian relationships between people of all colors, creeds, and classes. Instead, the traveling theater troupe tended toward the decidedly white bourgeois culture of John Bernard.

The argument that an economic and cultural "elite" dominated the theater until the Jacksonian period is a popular one and certainly has its merits. But a reading of the sources indicates to me that working class audiences were a significant part of the theater as early as the federal period, in part because of the overlap between circus

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Interpretation of the Sources of Minstrel Show Dialect," *American Quarterly* 37 (summer 1985), 260-285. Race, class, and the minstrel show is discussed further in the following chapter.

and stage drama, but also because of the afterglow of republican sentiment from the revolution. This republicanism is often mistaken by recent historians of the theater for patrician sentiment.[54] Sometimes this may have been the case, as with General Washington, for example. But individuals like Dunlap and Durang were not patrician in the traditional sense, yet they maintained a strong sense of republican virtue and integrity in their dealings with people both in and out of the theater. Dunlap went to his grave highly respected even though his theater endeavors had been a financial debacle. Theater in the colonies had provided stock plays that reflected the interests of the bourgeoisie and painted the economic and military empire of Britain with a sympathetic brush. The movement for a larger measure of self-rule in the colonies, which turned into a full-blown revolution in the 1770s, was not only grounded in republican theory and rhetoric, but also in a drive to "democratize" the economic empire that had been growing since the days of Henry VIII. The "first British empire" suffered a bit of a setback as a result, but from the standpoint of those suffering the effects of that empire, American sovereignty – as limited as it was before 1815 – represented an intensification of imperial expansion. The rawness of empire, so well captured a century later in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, crossed the Appalachians and grew to the Mississippi River and beyond, culminating in the Mexican War and the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. This rawness was unprecedented in the scope of its brutality, ethnic cleansing, and racial exploitation,

[54] Theater historian Bruce McConachie, who has done much to further the discourse of theater history, errs in this fashion in my view. Most conspicuously, see his "American Theatre in Context, from the Beginnings to 1870," in Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby, eds., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: Volume One:Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129-133.

and was in many respects due to the libertarianism of economic empire. These depredations were not, in many cases, perpetrated by a mercenary army serving an economic elite, it was a grassroots movement of the citizens of a white, Euro-American. "Nation-building" and material acquisition were the mantras, democratic-republicanism provided the rationale, and those who worked against it were considered inferior beings who had to be removed, one way or another. Theater's primary function was to lighten the dark side of the "removal," a process that took on new levels of brutality west of the Appalachians.

The study of Bernard's and particularly Ricketts' tour of the Mahican Corridor to Canada demonstrates how quickly one moved out of a "culture of empire" in its form of bourgeois "politeness" into a more ambiguous environment not so easily defined. A few months before Ricketts' Circus began their tour to Canada, traveler Francis Baily was making his way down the Ohio River between Pittsburgh and burgeoning "Mesopotamia" of Cincinnati. On the night of the twenty-first of February, Baily and his "Kentucky Boat" companions, enduring a thunderstorm the likes of which this Englishman had not previously encountered, spotted mysterious fires on the riverbank.[55] Curious to know what kind of natural phenomenon this might be, they steered their flatboat toward the enigma. Upon closer observation, they spied a bonfire and a number of human beings, painted black, dancing around the fire with torches in their hands and "muttering some strange incoherent sounds" in solidarity with the thunderstorm that was dominating the moment. With some effort,

[55] "Kentucky Boat" was the term often used for flat-bottomed barges carrying good and migrants down the river. The were not meant to make the return trip. See Francis Baily, *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 and 1797* (London: Baily Brothers, 1866), 152. Hereafter referenced as *Baily Journal*.

Baily was able to let go of his western sensibilities long enough to detect the benign nature of the performance, even if he likely still did not really understand it:

> Their peculiar appearance, whose effect was heightened by the contrast of the tempestuousness of the night, and the rolling of the thunder and lightning around us, put me in mind so much of the descriptions which are given of the infernal regions, that for the moment, I could not help considering them as so many imps let loose upon the earth to perform their midnight orgies; though it proved to be nothing more than a few Indians, who, disturbed by the inclemency of the weather, could not sleep, and were innocently diverting themselves with singing and dancing round their fire.[56]

One suspects there was something more to the performance than a "diversion," given that indigenous peoples did not typically separate what "western" society label physical phenomena – like a thunderstorm – from a religious or spiritual dimension.

Benjamin Hawkins, appointed by President George Washington to be the General Superintendent of Indian Affairs south of the Ohio River, noted another example of performances unrelated to the Euro-American culture of empire. In the "Boos-ke-tuh" ritual performance, called by whites the "Busk" ceremony, indigenous peoples celebrated the ripening of their corn crop in an eight-day purifying ritual. In the Busk, a new fire is kindled, from which all the homes in the village kindle their own fires. The yearly cycle is recommenced, illustrated in the performance of the Toc-oo-yule-gau (tadpole) dance. As Hawkins notes, "This happy institution of the Boos-ke-tuh, restores man to himself, to his family and to his nation. It is a general amnesty, which not only absolves the Indians from all crimes, murder only excepted, but seems to bury guilt itself in oblivion."[57] These and other indigenous ceremonies

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[56] *Baily Journal*, 190.

[57] Hawkins' account of the "Busk" is published in John Whitthoft, "Green Corn Ceremonialism in the Eastern Woodlands," *Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan*, no. 13 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949),

would soon be driven out of their traditional locales by the expanding United States. Hawkins goes on to express the popularly held view that the Indians "waste" the land, and that whites taking over the land is good and proper, and at least on one occasion requested by the "Chiefs." More violent "performances" amounted to ritual land expropriation – by the late-eighteenth century these performances were commonplace if not an institution in North America. Depredations brought upon the Indians of the region by white European and Euro-American settlers and the retaliation for those depredations stained this region with the blood of imperial expansion as well. I treated the "performances" of the so-called Paxton Boys on the peaceful Conestoga Indians at Lancaster in an earlier chapter. Similar attitudes and behaviors characterized the Anglo-American imperial culture's first wave of expansion over the mountains.

Travelers who ventured west of the Allegheny Mountains in the late eighteenth century, like Francis Baily noted above, found a world in great flux – as it had been for several generations.[58] As historian Richard White has noted, the *pays d'en haut*, (the French term for the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley region), after the Revolution was a collection of far-flung villages, some Indian, some French-Indian, some Euro-American. These villages acted according to their own interests, which did not always coincide and frequently conflicted with the broader goals of those pursuing economic empire.[59] Ritual performances indigenous to the region had long

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[58] For a survey of the historical dynamics of this region, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[59] Ibid., 366-368.

been recognized if not shared by the colonists and their armies. Most of these were related to war and peace: pipe ceremonies; war feasts, songs, and dances; giving of war belts; accepting the hatchet ceremonies; rituals to gain favor of manitous, et.al. White goes on to note that the white accounts of the Revolution in the *pays d'en haut* reads like a staged drama:

> The same accounts of events can be read on two levels: as texts structured to give meaning in terms of the larger conventions of symbols of Anglo-American society and as a less conscious delineation of the actual social bonds that held the people of the *pays d'en haut* together.[60]

The narratives, I argue, were given commonality in part by assumptions perpetuated by theatrical performances. The inter- and intra-social bonds were also defined by performances, indigenous and colonial.

Some decades before the arrival of the English to the eastern gateway of the *pays d'en haut* at the "Forks" of the Ohio, the Iroquois Confederacy, perhaps concerned about the French allying with their traditional enemies, attacked and drove out the peoples of that region. This included Algonkian groups such as the Shawnee, the Sac and Fox, the Miamis, and others including the unaligned Iroquois-speaking Mingoes.[61] French presence in the region persisted, nonetheless, and in 1754, the British, who were nearer in proximity to the Iroquois, decided to act against that presence that they saw as blocking their expansion to the west. After the withdrawal of the French from mainland North America in 1763, the Forks region was open to

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[60] Ibid., 372, 375. White cites the correspondence of General Henry "Hair Buyer" Hamilton on this. Hamilton's encouragement of Indian raids on Euro-American frontier settlements in Pennsylvania and Kentucky by offering a bounty for scalps earned him the nickname.

[61] James Patrick McClure, "The Ends of the American Earth: Pittsburgh and the Upper Ohio Valley to 1795," 2 volumes (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983), 24.

settlement by the British, even though they attempted to restrict that settlement. Actually, it proved useful to allow some migration as far as Fort Pitt so farmers could help provision the troops stationed there. General Gage reportedly said that travel in American made the military's worst situations in European wars better than the best situations in the North American colonies. Thus, Euro-American colonists moved into the area in spite of British restrictions as well as Indian opposition and, by the American Revolution had a significant presence there.[62] Performances of the British colonial army at Fort Pitt and other frontier British forts have been reported by other researchers. British officers were accustomed to the theater and, as noted in the chapter on the Revolution, often took it upon themselves to produce plays at their garrisons.[63] Fort Pitt commandant Captain Simon Ecuyer, just prior to Pontiac's siege, reported to Colonel Henry Bouquet that "we have a club every Monday and a ball on Saturday evening, composed of the most beautiful ladies of the garrison. We regale them with punch and if it is not strong enough the whiskey is at their service. You may believe that we are not altogether the dupes."[64]

When German physician Johann David Schoepf traveled through the United States in 1783-84, the Revolution was still very much in evidence. People were not

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[62] Ibid., 34-35.

[63] Lynne Connor, *Pittsburgh in Stages: Two Hundred Years of Theater* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 4; Edward Garland Fletcher, "Records and History of Theatrical Activities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from Their Beginning to 1861, in Two Volumes," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1931), I, 1. Both of these researchers cite Johann David Schoepf's travel account, although he was in the area in 1783-84 and I could find no mention of performances by British troops in his journal. I stop short of eliminating their reports primarily because, as we know from Revolutionary War accounts, British officers commonly *did* stage plays at their garrisons.

[64] Letter, Ecuyer to Bouquet, 8 January, 1763, in Mary C. Darlington, ed., *Fort Pitt and Letters from the Frontier* (New York: Arno Press and the *New York Times*, 1971), 111.

yet much in the mood for formal performances as they were still seen by most as frivolous if not corrupt expressions of British imperial culture. Indeed, the predominance of Quaker culture and its concomitant disdain of theater remained in many parts of Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia. Elizabeth Drinker had noted the perceived dissipations of empire from hair styles to the theater to the continentals' own "monopolizers and forestallers."[65] Schoepf recounted that even in Philadelphia, "A darky with a broken and squeezy fiddle made the finest dance-music for the most numerous assembly."[66] And this was only five years after the "Mischianza."[67]

In the frontier regions, this was even more pronounced. Schoepf had done his research on the short history of the region and was familiar with the colonists' attack on a group of peaceful Moravian Indians that surpassed even the brutal actions of the Paxton Boys nineteen years earlier. Here, in 1782 on the Muskingham River in what is today northeast Ohio at the village of Gnadenhütten, "53 grown men and women and 42 children" were killed by a band of militiamen from western Pennsylvania. This occurred when the perpetrators initially surrounded the Indians while they were making sugar from maple trees in the area. After agreeing to share their communal wine, the Indians were told by the militia that they would be taken to Pittsburgh where they would be safer. But after a meeting of the militiamen, led by one David Williamson, it was determined that the Indians would be killed the next day, and they

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[65] *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, Elain Forman Crane, ed., two volumes (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), I: 306, 314, 349.

[66] Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784*, translated and edited by Alfred J. Morrison (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968, first published in the U.S., Philadelphia, 1911, first published in Germany, Erlangen: Johann Jacob Palm 1788), 90. Hereafter referred to as *Schoepf Travels*.

[67] See my discussion of the "Mischianza" in Chapter Four.

were told of this. They spent the night singing and praying and the next day were bound "two by two," taken to two different houses, and murdered. This triggered another round of conflict between natives and colonials in the upper Ohio region.[68]

Along with the Paxton Boys account, (treated in Chapter Three) these are presented here not so much to rehash the bloodletting as to establish that such events were not particularly unusual on the leading edge of the economic empire under examination. Indeed, Scots-Irish, German-American, and Euro-American settlers in the West had lost family members to Indian retaliations for their own lost relatives as well as encroachment on lands they considered theirs. These "frontiersmen" often followed their own interests *vis-à-vis* national and imperial interests which they deemed less important if not corrupt and tyrannical. Like the Native Americans, they were impossible to control, and would fight nearly as hard against perceived tyrannical intrusions into their world as they did against their fellow independent spirits in the *pays d'en haut*.[69] Nevertheless, their presence represented the arrival of a lasting presence of the Atlantic market economy, and either British (Canada) or Euro-American (U.S.) economic empire. Performances of the culture of empire in the more stable population centers diluted the brutal aspects of the frontier experience and romanticized the positive aspects. As the land was expropriated from the indigenous inhabitants and commodified, varieties of performance that spanned the cultural gulf between indigenous and imperial appeared. Urban theater stages

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[68] *Schoepf Travels*, 151-153. The official website of the Gnadenhütten Massacre reports twenty-eight men, twenty-nine women, and thirty-nine children: http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=499.

[69] White, *The Middle Ground*, 378.

functioned to "soften the brow" of these areas and move them in the direction of the British imperial culture of the Atlantic world.[70]

Squatter associations at the Forks had been ordering provincial imperial officers from Philadelphia out of the area since at least the early 1770s. Full-fledged regional independence all along the western mountains flourished with the imperial crisis of 1776. From North Carolina to the Forks, backwoods families sought, fought for and, at the conclusion of the war, planned for independence. The short-lived "states" of Franklin, west of the Blue Ridge, and Westsylvania, at the Forks, were two political entities that expressed the desires of the locals although these desires were ultimately repressed. By the 1790s, the repression of local autonomy was turned into federal taxation – more specifically, taxation designed to enrich the centers of economic empire at the expense of the peripheries. The Whiskey Rebellion of western Pennsylvania more or less began with a performance of "rough music" – the tar and feathering of tax collector Robert Johnson at Pigeon Creek near Pittsburgh by fifteen to twenty men in blackface, some in women's dresses.[71] The folk culture from the old country provided precedence for protests, riots, tar-and-featherings, and similar remedies for social maladies. As with the Stamp Act riots of Boston, Philadelphia, and other colonial communities, Pennsylvania farmers responded to unwanted government intrusions into their lives with these kinds of performances. These peaked during the Whiskey Rebellion, where the tarring and feathering of tax

[70] Connor, *Pittsburgh in Stages*, 5.

[71] William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 20.

collectors and Federalist supporters was seen by the new federal government as a direct threat to its sovereignty. And indeed it was and by intent. The new centralized power inherent in the Constitution was seen by many of its opponents as an incarnation of King-in-Parliament, the entity that had just been defeated in a protracted war. Western Pennsylvania had long been a hot-bed for anti-federalism and what the Federalists were calling by 1793, "Jacobinism," after the radical French revolutionaries. But they came by their opposition to Federalist policies honestly, particularly in light of the scheme to repay the nation's debt to rich war profiteers like Robert Morris, and to enable wealthy landowners and whiskey distillers to get and maintain an edge in the real estate and whiskey markets vis-à-vis the small farmers and producers. The connection between schemes to benefit the wealthy and the ability to employ those schemes in federal law was found in the combination of Robert Morris and Alexander Hamilton.[72]

Historians have produced numerous studies of this fascinating series of events, and indeed it does reveal much about conflicting visions of what the new republic was to be. Those like the western Pennsylvania farmers, who resented taxes designed to both pay interest on bonds held by the rich and to undermine their own independence. This force for democracy – in the true meaning of the word – was a

[72] Hogeland has a succinct summary of Morris and Hamilton's plans for paying for Pennsylvania's part of the war debt through a tax on whiskey in ibid., 27-70. Hogeland leans heavily on E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), passim. See also Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 462-481; Stephen R. Boyd, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Jerry A. Clouse, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

direct threat to sovereignty manifested through wealth, whether landed or fluid. Indeed, here again was Robert Walpole; here again was Grenville's Stamp Tax; here again was a distant government imposing its will on local people to an unacceptable degree. And while it stopped just short of full rebellion, the performances steeped in folk traditions of blackface cross-dressing and rough music characterized an anti-imperial sentiment.

Yet, some of these individuals, like David Williamson, had participated in the pre-meditated massacre of innocent, unarmed Moravian Indians at Gnadenhütten only a decade earlier. This "performance" may have seemed to serve the interest of expanding empire on its face, but in fact probably cost more lives by generating much resentment among the indigenous peoples of the region. But Indian-hating was an institution at this point – General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's "Legion of the United States," a professional standing army trained to kill Indians, was populated in the majority by frontier militiamen like Williamson, the same men who opposed on principle a standing army that might (and would) be used against them.[73] As for urban environments and empire, at the culmination of the Whiskey Rebellion, when six thousand armed militiamen mustered at Braddock's Field outside of Pittsburgh, the impetus to burn the young town as a symbol of heavy-handed imperialism was narrowly turned aside. So opposition to economic imperialism in western Pennsylvania was inherently a rural phenomenon that rejected imposition of policies favorable to an urban elite. And, as cultural divides were breeched in the *pays d'en*

[73] See Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, passim; also Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

haut, this aspect of opposition holds true. On the other hand, theatrical performances were traditionally urban phenomena but, as shall be shown, that did not necessarily hold true in the Trans-Appalachian West.

In the 1790s, there were no urban areas, at least in the European sense, west of the Appalachian Mountains. Taverns along the road to the village and garrison of Pittsburgh, as well as on the Ohio, Mississippi, and later the Missouri Rivers were places upon which travelers depended for sustenance, shelter, and the few musical and theatrical performances that occurred in the early days of national expansion. These tavern keepers, like their neighbors, still enjoyed relative independence in these early days before the game was hunted out and food sources were completely commodified. Francis Baily observed that the abundance of food was such that European notion of dependence and deference were unknown in the back country, "[T]hey pass their lives without any regard to the smiles or frowns of men in power." Regardless of the amount of food available to travelers on any given day, the charge for room and board at the taverns was the same.[74] By the mid-1790s, circuses, menageries, and small amateur theater troupes were no longer a rarity at these taverns.[75]

Like the schemes to pay bondholders and tax small whiskey producers through the whiskey tax, land speculators also manipulated government to their

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[74] *Baily Journal*, 131-32.

[75] *Pittsburgh Gazette,* May 14, 1796; June 20, 1798; October 16, 1801. *Baily Journal*, 134, 151. Conner also summarizes some of these in *Pittsburgh in Stages*, 4-6. Such venues permeated the trans-Appalachian West and will be treated at greater length in the next chapter. The best primary sources for this are Solomon Smith's *The Theatrical Apprenticeship and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol Smith . . .* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846); and *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years . . .* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1868).

advantage at the expense of small Euro-American landholders and settlers, to say nothing of Native American villagers. These land speculation schemes had direct ties to early theater performances west of the Alleghenies. Theatrical performances began to appear in the taverns of Pittsburgh in the 1780s. In April of 1790, the local newspaper announced the performance of *Cato* with *All the World's a Stage*, to be performed "in the Garrison."[76] By the mid-1790s, the "New Theatre over the Allegheny" opened under the direction and management of officers from the Pennsylvania Population Company.[77] With rural farms and villages – Euro-American and Native American – predominating in the upper Ohio country and the Allegheny Mountains, theater represented the earliest signs of an urban culture of empire formulating in Pittsburgh.

The Pennsylvania Population Company (PPC) was one of four land speculation companies to form in Philadelphia during this period. Along with the PPC, venture capitalists in Philadelphia formed the Asylum Company, the North American Land Company, and the Territorial Company. These were among the risk ventures in which Revolutionary War financier Robert Morris engaged, (to his financial demise in the end). He was heavily invested at least in the Asylum and North American Companies, and many of the investors in these companies were also invested in the new Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia.[78] There was an extremely close tie between these speculations and the governments of both

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76 Ibid., April 17, 1790.

[77] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February 27, 1796.

[78] Heather Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 84, 202n.56.

Pennsylvania and the United States. This tie was rooted in the bond speculations that financed the war against Britain. In 1792, the Department of War was planning to send a force led by General "Mad" Anthony Wayne to put an end to the presence of Native Americans in the upper Ohio country. Knowing this, Pennsylvania's General Assembly passed "An Act for the sale of vacant lands within this Commonwealth." This made it possible to obtain land in western Pennsylvania north of the Ohio and west of the Allegheny River and Conewango Creek. For seven pounds ten shillings per one hundred acres, and a promise to "cultivate, improve, and settle upon" the land, one could obtain up to four hundred acres plus six percent for roads and highways – a total of four hundred twenty-four acres.[79] There were two ways of obtaining the grant, by registering for land to be surveyed at the land office, or to make actual improvements on the surveyed land. This meant that land speculators in Philadelphia could obtain these lands without actually being in western Pennsylvania.

The cozy relationship between speculators and government officials, often the same individuals, led to abuse of a system designed to be abused. For example, John Nicholson, co-founder of the Asylum Company with Robert Morris was also Comptroller General of Pennsylvania, a position he had held since 1782. Nicholson was also on the State Board of Property, and had become fast friends with Pennsylvania Surveyor-General Daniel Brodhead. This relationship helped him to secure these land warrants, including purchasing some donation lands from soldiers who were desperate for money and did not realize the value of the land. To top it off,

[79] R. Nelson Hale, "The Pennsylvania Population Company," *Pennsylvania History* 16 (April 1949), 123.

while soldiers could file grievances in the courts once they realized what had happened, Nicholson controlled the salaries of the judges that heard their cases and they typically ruled in favor of the landholding speculators.[80] The state legislature pursued Nicholson's impeachment for speculating in the donation holders' depreciation certificates – documents guaranteed to cover the difference between what they were owed and what they sold their land for -- but he was ultimately acquitted.[81]

He took out a total of six-hundred and forty warrants on lands in the Erie Triangle (on or near Lake Erie) and on Beaver Creek (an Ohio tributary about twenty-five miles below the Forks). Each of these warrants was filed under a different name and provided a large chunk of the Asylum Company holdings. The courts openly permitted this practice, which gave no advantage to individual settlers, but gave speculators an opportunity to profit from lands taken from indigenous peoples through publicly-funded wars. The PPC added another five hundred warrants in Beaver County and in the Donation Lands – lands that had originally been set aside for the payment of Revolutionary War soldiers. Another investment block of the PPC was the Holland Company, a group of investors from Albany, New York who purchased one thousand warrants through their agent Theophilus Cazenove. Several

[80] Barbara Ann Chernow, "Robert Morris, Land Speculator," (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1974), 93.

[81] Hale, 125; Chernow, 94. Here there is a discrepancy in the secondary literature. Hale states that Nicholson was impeached. Chernow says that while Nicholson was acquitted at his impeachment trial, he resigned. Hale's statement is confusing because he cites Edmund Hogan's, *The Impeachment, Trial and Acquittal of Francis Hopkinson and John Nicholson* (Philadelphia: N.P., 1796), I, 68-70, which seems to explicitly argue that he was acquitted, yet Hale does not qualify his statement that Nicholson was impeached. The latter may be the primary source, but it is unavailable to me at this time.

former Fort Pitt commanders and officers as well as Aaron Burr were also partners in the PPC. Their stated goal was to provide a wall of settlement between the "wilderness" and the residents of Pennsylvania, but in fact it was a land speculation venture.[82]

The plan included hiring settlers to secure the necessary improvements. They would be located in the corners of four separate warrants to be near one another for safety and mutual assistance. In each four hundred-acre tract, the investors sold one hundred acres to these settlers at a dollar an acre. The settlers would also receive another hundred acres for making improvements. This, ostensibly, would leave the speculators two hundred acres in each warrant that would increase in value due to the settlers' improvements. Ideally, the settlers would lay out a community at the "corners" to further enhance the value of the land. In light of this "development" project, it makes sense that the PPC would finance a theatrical troupe to try and "bring civility" to the frontier town of Pittsburgh. If Pittsburgh were seen as a burgeoning Philadelphia, land buyers, hesitant from decades of Indian wars, would be emboldened to pay higher prices and continue adding value to the property.[83]

So the "New Theater over the Allegheny" presented a variety of entertainments in the "season" of 1795-96. Only two mentions appear in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* of any performance during this period. One is a notice from one George Saunders, who returned "his most respectful thanks of the Ladies and

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[82] Hale, 124-126.

[83] Heather Nathans has connected the dots between PPC investors and Philadelphia theater; I have not yet had a chance to peruse the Library Company or the Pittsburgh archive for the same connection with the "New Theater over the Allegheny," but the circumstancial evidence is pretty strong for a connection.

Gentlemen of Pittsburgh for the encouragement he has met with and begs leave to inform them that he will return the week after the court with his brother, when they will exhibit a variety of new performances."[84] The other, under the heading, "Theatrical Intelligence," mentions a variety of performances presented at this theater since it had "opened early last season." Some of these were stock plays from the London stage. These included *Who's the Dupe?, High Life Below Stairs*, *The Padlock*, *Like Master Like Man*, and other well-known farces. But there were also a number of enigmatically titled performances. In addition to "the Gallery being much diverted by Lofty Tumbling, and the old fashioned amusement of the *Tight Rope*," there were plays with local themes. *Trip to Presque'isle*, *The Pre-emption, or Flats of Le Bœuf*, *The Actual Settlement of Eleven Point Gained*, all have titles with western Pennsylvania references which, lacking further information, one must speculate that perhaps a traveling troupe not unlike Ricketts' Circus had improvised some plays on local topics. This was the immediate aftermath of the Whiskey Rebellion, so there was no shortage of material for such improvisations.[85]

That these players, at least some of them, were from the Old American Company resident at the John Street Theater in New York, is supported by the salutation of the *Gazette* notice: *Vivat Respublica*, the standard salutation of American Company announcements.[86] Also supporting this hypothesis is the fact that New York and Philadelphia were both hit by yellow fever in 1795, thus wiping most

[84] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February 20, 1796.

[85] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February 27, 1796.

[86] See, for example, entries in Joseph Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*, in two volumes, 1750-1860 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), I: 113, 174.

of the fall season. Indeed, the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia did not open until December 14th, and when it did it was in competition with Ricketts' circus at the Pantheon.[87] John Hodgkinson, with part of the American Company, is known to have opened a new theater in the village of Hartford, CT in August of 1795, hopefully north of the worst of the yellow fever outbreak. Lewis Hallam took the remainder of the company to Providence for a brief season. Yellow fever was a chronic problem in the Mid-Atlantic states in the 1790s. [88]

Given that some players from the American Company had made their way to Albany in 1769 and 1789, noted above, it seems reasonable that this may have been the case in Pittsburgh in the fall of 1795. The resident troupe of the "New Theater over the Allegheny" did not last long as it apparently repaired with its managers to the "New Theater," [i.e., Chestnut Street], before the end of the season.

But strolling players continued to present everything from "Transparent Paintings, [with] shades after the Italian manner," to:

> Vaultings, Sommersets, Flip-flaps, and Ground Tumblings . . . admirably executed, with some new Feats on the Slack Rope superior to any thing before exhibited in the United States, not excepting the dashes of Robert *Spinacutta* in the Genesee, or Judge Sully in Georgia, or any thing *t'other Side the Gutter*.[89]

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[87] Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 263.

[88] Ibid., 124. Dunlap, I, 268. 1793, 1797, and 1799 were the worst years, but it appeared every fall. For a primary source, see *Facts and Observations Relative to the Nature and Origin of the Pestilential Fever,Which Prevailed in This City, in 1793, 1797, and 1798*, report by the physicians of the College of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1798). For a secondary study, see J. Worth Estes and Billy Gordon Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton, MA: Published for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia by Science History Publications, 1997).

[89] Ibid.,

These mentions of well-known performers who glided easily between circus and playhouse indicates that the strolling players in Pittsburgh, and/or the newspaper editors, had a knowledge of them. Robert Spinacuta and his wife had worked with John Bill Ricketts and John Durang in Philadelphia and New York.[90] William Sully trained at Sadler's Wells in London and was well-known in Charleston, Savannah, Richmond, and theaters on the southern circuit.[91] Another advertisement appears for a "Dancing School," led by one R. Davenport and held in the house of William Earl, who also sold dry goods.[92] As John Durang repeatedly mentions in his memoir, dancing schools were a good way for performers to supplement their all-too-scanty shares and benefits on the touring circuit.[93] It seems reasonable to conjecture, in lieu of further evidence, that Mr. Davenport was a performer with the Population Company's players supplementing his income. Such performers represented a relatively small circle, and it is likely that the Pittsburgh performers knew and probably performed with Spinacuta, Sully, Ricketts, Durang; to say nothing of Philadelphia and New York stages. There were simply not enough resident troupes to employ all the performers in the country.

Moreover, the target audience of these performers who were in Pittsburgh when the notice was published in February 1796, appears to have been the plebian/yeoman classes. Indeed, there were not that many people in Pittsburgh – most were on their farms. The American Museum estimated the 1792 population at

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[90] *Durang Memoir*, 43-44.

[91] May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling*, 20-21.

[92] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 23 January, 1796.

[93] *Durang Memoir*, 38, 110, 116, 127, 132.

six hundred and fifty. The 1800 census gives the population as one thousand five hundred sixty-five.[94] The *Gazette* indicated that tickets would be available in "Cheapside," the more egalitarian section of town along the Allegheny. One can speculate that the location of the theater was perhaps not ideal for those who might most vigorously support it: the more well-to-do residents residing near the Monongahela.[95] Given the information in the *Gazette* notice then, it would seem that an offshoot of players from the Wignell and Reinagle troop in Philadelphia, financed by the PPC, tested the waters and, finding receipts inadequate, gave way to more itinerant players who, combined with a few locals, adapted Whiskey Rebellion events to the stage. To this was added some circus and gymnastic performances. The notice reads that at present, the players, of whom "it is said have no managers," were getting up a new play called *The Insurrection*; appropriate enough for a post-Whiskey Rebellion environment. If only one had a copy of the script.

Like Ricketts' Circus traveling up the Mahican Corridor a year and a half later, theater in Pittsburgh in the 1795-96 season was truly in uncharted territory. As an emissary of the culture of empire, it is worth taking a moment to ponder the actual performances we do know something about and how they may have been received. In the farce *Who's the Dupe?*, no one escapes unscathed or goes unrewarded. Written by Mrs. Hanna Cowley, a successful London playwright, and printed in 1779, *Who's the Dupe?* contains material that both validates the culture of empire and looks at it critically, particularly as a gendered critique. The character of Granger is a younger

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[94] Cited in Sarah H. Killikelly, *The History of Pittsburgh: Its Rise and Progress* (Pittsburgh: B.C. and Gordon Montgomery, 1906), 111, 128.

[95] Quoted in Connor, *Pittsburgh in Stages*, 7, 224 n.13.

son who has been dependent on an allowance from his older brother, who now wants him to use his purchased army commission to seek his fortune in the East Indies. Granger is determined to alleviate this situation by winning the hand of Elizabeth Doiley and marry into her father Abraham's fortune. Confiding in Sandburg, a Doiley intimate, at the beginning of the play, Granger, who is something of a fop, lays out his current prospects as a militarized fortune-seeker within the context of empire:

> I can't grow rich upon the smell of gunpowder. Your true East-India Soldier is of a different genus from those who strew'd Minden with Frenchmen, and must have as great a fecundity of character, as a Dutch Burgomaster. Whilst his Sword is in his hand, his Pen must be in his cockade: he must be as expert at Fractions, as at Assaults; to-day mowing down ranks of soft Beings, just risen from their Embroidery; to-morrow, selling Pepper and Beetle-nut – this hour a Son of Mars, striding over heaps of slain; the next, an Auctioneer – knocking down Chintz and Calico to the best bidder.[96]

With the Treaty of Greenville having just been signed after a prolonged war between Euro-American colonizers and a heterogeneous group of Indians trying to hold onto their villages in the Ohio country, these lines spoken within the first minutes of the play's opening would have resonated with more than a few in a Pittsburgh audience. Indeed, the Treaty was published in the *Gazette* in October of 1795, which would have been near the beginning of this season that the paper announced four months later.[97] Pittsburgh residents had been supplementing their livelihood, if not outright making a living, supplying the Legion of the United States since it had been in Legionville, Pennsylvania and after it moved to Fort Washington near Cincinnati.[98]

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[96] Mrs. Hanna Cowley, *Who's the Dupe? A Farce: As It Is Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane* (London: J. Dodsley, L. Davis, W. Owen, et.al., 1779), 2.

[97] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 3 October, 1795.

[98] Hogeland, *Whiskey Rebellion*, 101.

Written by a woman, this play represents a significant critique of the gendered structure of Euro-American imperial culture. When Doiley's preferred mate for his daughter, an Oxford scholar by the name of Gradus, arrives with the intent to impress both father and daughter, he succeeds only with the former. After numerous references that only the well-educated – which does not include Doiley himself – would understand, Elizabeth replies that she does not understand him because, "The education given to Women shuts us entirely from such refined acquaintance." To which Gradus replies: "Perfectly right, Madam, perfectly right. The more simple your education, the nearer you approach the pure manners of the purest ages. The charms of Women were never more powerful . . . as in those immortal periods, when they could neither read, nor write." For his part, Doiley is clearly in the category of *nouveau riche* and underscores the fact by observing that:

> A Peeress in those days did not cost so much as a Barber's Daughter in our's. Miss Friz must have her Dancing, her French, her Tambour, her Harpsicholl, her Jography, her Stronomy---whilst her Father, to support all this, lives upon Sprats; or, once in two years, calls his Creditors to a composition."[99]

So Elizabeth, daughter of the *nouveau riche* Doiley and who looks upon Gradus with disdain but is interested in Granger who seeks her hand for his own gain, and her friend Charlotte, who is enamored with Gradus, conspire to turn the tables on the old man. With the help of Sandburg, they convince Gradus to behave like a fop and Granger to act the scholar. This ambiguity of personalities and social roles would set well with a society that was fluid and independent-minded. Also, it was somewhat subversive of entrenched privilege at European universities, a trait that

99 Ibid., 7-8

could be seen as a proto-anti-intellectualism that has characterized a significant portion of the U.S. population over time. In any case, statements are made in the farce that cut through the economic mechanics of the empire. An audience may have seen itself in such statements noted in the passage of Granger early on regarding his possible appointment in the East Indies. And while this could be read as a critique, it can also be read as a normalization of such activities. If the natives of India are being slaughtered, then the destruction of Indian peoples in America is not an isolated incident. Also, the oppression of women, captured in the statements of Elizabeth, is acknowledged but no course of action to rectify the situation is suggested, which can be seen as an implication that such oppression is inevitable if unjust – much like the situation with indigenous peoples East and West.

Another of the plays listed, *High Life Below Stairs*, was also a stock play from the London stage, written by David Garrick, published and first performed in 1759. The gist of this play is that servants are cynically taking advantage of their masters, with the exception of a couple of loyal characters. The depictions of the "rogue" servants match depictions of rogue masters in other stock plays – they are distracted by drinking, sex, and one-upmanship. Indeed, the character of Kitty sings a song, set to the folk tune "Humours of Glynn":

> Come here Fellow Servant, and listen to me,
> I'll shew you how those of superior Degree
> Are only Dependants, no better than we.
>
> *Chorus:*
> Both high and low in this do agree,
> 'Tis here Fellow Servant,
> And there Fellow Servant,
> And all in a Livery.

See yonder fine Spark in Embroidery drest,
Who bows to the Great, and if they smile, is blest;
What is he? I'faith, but a Servant at best.
Cho.

Nature made all alike, no Distinction she craves,
So we laugh at the great World, its Fools and its Knaves,
For we are all Servants, but they are all Slaves.
Cho.

The fat shining Glutton, looks up to the Shelf,
The wrinkled lean Miser bows down to his Pelf,
And the curlpated Bean is a Slave to himself.
Cho.

The gay sparkling Belle, who the whole Town alarms,
And with Eyes, Lips, and Neck, sets the Smarts all in Arms,
Is a Vassal herself, a mere Drudge to her Charms.
Cho.

Then we'll drink like our Betters, and laugh, sing, and love;
And when sick of one Place, to another we'll move,
For with Little and Great, the best Joy is to rove.
Cho.[100]

That *anyone* who plays this Hobbesian game is a slave is the message of the play. This message would have resonated with independent yeoman farmers and mechanics opposed to centralized authority and still disappointed and/or disillusioned by the adoption of federalism. A distinction is represented between the servants of aristocracy and those of the bourgeoisie – in this case a West Indian planter named Peregrine Lovel. In the final scene, Lovel states, "If Persons of Rank would act up to their Standard, it would be impossible that their Servants could ape them. But when they affect every thing that is ridiculous, it will be in the Power of any low Creature

[100] David Garrick, *High Life Below Stairs*, *A farce of two acts,* London: Newbery, Bailye, Frederick,1759), 43-44.

to follow their Example."[101] The moral of the story, then, is to act with dignity and integrity and your servants will not be able to mimic you, thus maintaining that social distinction for which one is striving. This does not explain, however, the integrity of Robert and Tom who, in some ways, behave with more aplomb than their "masters" – apparently a tip of the hat by Garrick to the English tradition of the "loyal footman."

In any case, performances in Pittsburgh in the 1790s were performances on a cultural frontier. They were part of the culture of empire that was expanding over the Alleghenies, down the Ohio, as well as up the Hudson, and into the Trans-Appalachian backcountry of the South. This imperial culture had many facets to it in post-revolutionary America – it was the early years of the rise of circus, melodrama, and pantomime as part of the democratizing empire. Certainly, the bourgeois culture of politeness was resumed with new centers of finance and power emerging – the revolution was not that revolutionary. A radical revolution had been avoided by both the enactment of the Constitution and the deployment of federal troops. Some radical performances on the frontier, rooted in folk traditions, acted in opposition to centralized power, but those "performers" in turn exacted a toll on an indigenous culture desperately trying to hold onto some sort of land base. Yet, there were exceptions: Francis Baily saw indigenous performances not as acts of demon-possessed savages as the Puritans had, but as relatively benign events. John Durang engaged indigenous peoples to learn about their dances and other performances so he could perform them – although he also presented an early "redface" act on the Euro-American frontier. John Bernard epitomized a characteristic imperial bourgeois view

[101] Ibid., 59.

of class and race – his home turf was appropriately the Federal Street Theater in Boston, as well as among the Augustan actors of Drury Lane. Mrs. Hanna Cowley's play, *Who's the Dupe?* boldly confronted the disparities between the genders – a form of empire within the empire. As this expanding economic empire continued to disrupt and displace the ancient peoples of the interior of North America, it was confronted with new environments and new circumstances that public performances endeavored to explain. The empire was rapidly democratizing, although there were boundaries to that democratization along class, race, and gender lines – some of those same lines were also the boundaries of the empire. But with that caveat, anyone willing to "play the game," i.e., pursue wealth, commerce, and empire could conceivably take their place among the bourgeois pseudo-aristocracy. Many chose this path as the folk memory of a moral economy and the classical republican rhetoric of the Revolution faded. With the help of theater performances, this path became an assumption of the Euro-American empire; this assumption was played out in the nation-building of the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Valleys as well as the Old Southwest as the empire gained control of the Trans-Appalachian West and beyond.

Chapter Six
Westward Ho for Empire: Theater and Performance in the pre-Civil War West and South

By 1811, Native Americans of the Old Northwest had retrenched their resistance to Euro-American expansion since the defeats of the 1790s culminating in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 and Treaty of Greenville the following year. The most recent aspect of this retrenchment had featured a millennial religious movement led by the brother of the Shawnee Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, or simply "The Prophet." The Prophet had experienced a life-changing vision that had brought him out of a hopeless alcoholic despair, rallying numerous followers to the cause of preventing further white expansion in the Northwest Territory. While his brother Tecumseh traveled throughout the trans-Appalachian West organizing a pan-Indian alliance, The Prophet laid out a set of rules his followers were to obey. Many of his followers were members of communities bereft of something that could be called a traditional homeland – they had been displaced from New York, Pennsylvania, Canada, Virginia, Kentucky, and now the Ohio country. Desperate for something that would turn the tide, they followed Tenskwatawa. In addition to eschewing all things originating in white Euro-American culture, even white dogs and cats, the Prophet's vision required new redemptive prayers and dances directed toward the earth and the ancestors. In short, in the lower Ohio valley and its tributaries, people desperate to hang onto some measure of their culture and resource base, altered their performances as part of that attempt. The Prophet insisted that these new dances and prayers be

performed every morning and every night, which would not have been considered unusual in the Indians' world.[1]

Just a few miles up the Ohio River, in Kentucky, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, Euro-American society was also experiencing a change in performances as it continued its expansion at the expense of indigenous peoples. New styles of performance that had come on the scene in the 1790s were among the most popular in the "West," namely melodrama, pantomime, the circus, which was beginning to include menageries, and a variety of "mixed" performances from "tumbling" to fireworks displays. This chapter is a study of performances in frontier river towns, investigating their role in the culture of the Euro-American empire. This includes the towns of Lexington, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, and up the Missouri River to Leavenworth, in Kansas Territory on the edge of the Great Plains during "Bleeding Kansas," when the empire was once again turning against itself. These performances, I argue, represented an amalgamation of traditional folk and imperial culture that rationalized land expropriation and the economics of the chattel slave system, as well as perpetuating a culture of "politeness" in the outlying communities of the first American West.

"Modern Jacobinical drama" was how Samuel Coleridge negatively characterized melodrama, a genre that attracted the "criminal element," "senseless, illiterate savages," and the "capricious, ungrateful rabble" – quite a contrast, as others have pointed out, to Charles Lamb's "man of genius."[2] Beginning with the adaptation

[1] Letter, Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, December 23, 1812, *Thomas Forsyth Papers*, Box 4-1, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO. For a recent study of this period, see Colin G. Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York: Viking, 2007).

[2] "Introduction," in Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, eds., *Melodrama: The*

of German and French melodramas for the American stage, ironically instigated by William Dunlap, Gothic romanticism came to the theaters of the United States. Gothic meant a Manichean construction of castles, secret passageways, insidious plots against the hero/heroine, purity, virtue, love, and family, came to define much of the performance culture of the "frontier" theater. As Henry Marie Brackenridge warned the readers of his memoir published in an era when "Romanticism" was clearly ascendant, "Now-a-days, since truth is only sought in romance, this little volume may be thought somewhat dull and uninteresting. The reader will find nothing marvellous *[sic]* in its incidents, nothing improbable, nothing that is not strictly true."[3] The genre of melodrama helped Euro-Americans of the "white republic" embrace a highly romanticized, even idyllic, self-identity.[4]

White male Euro-Americans of this period, generally speaking, typically saw themselves as defending republican virtue against all comers, be they "Indian savages," "Negro simpletons," or British tyrants. Sol Smith, an actor and manager whose Jacksonian republicanism, as I will illustrate, was exemplary and defined much of his life, told of an incident when he was a strolling player touring western New York and Canada in 1824. Arriving in Niagara, Smith's troupe was interrupted in their performance by a group of Canadians in the room next to them singing "God

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Cultural Emergence of a Genre (New York: St. Marin's Press, 1996), viii.

[3] Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Recollections of the Persons and Places in the West* (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jr., and Bros., 1834), iii.

[4] For "white republic," see Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (London: Verso, 1990); for a succinct discussion of American theater in the Romantic Era, see Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby, eds, *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Save the King," "Rule Britannia," and other loyalist songs. They could not make the price of admission even at half price, Smith complained, and a request for them to quiet down was met with derision, the Canadians replying that their goal was to "drive off the d--n Yankee vagabond actors." After the play, the actors went to the tavern to seek them out and "'thrash them' for our American blood was up." They were met by a group of Canadians reinforced by "three or four boat hands – I will not call them boat *men* – some half-breed Indians, and a couple of negroes." A brawl ensued, which was soon interrupted by a "large, fat, red-faced Englishman" who was taken aback by the unbalanced numbers (twenty for the Canadians, "without the niggers," and twelve for the Americans). In his characteristic pointed prose, Smith described what followed:

> "You say you are going to whip the d-d Yankees" – here off went his coat – "and you are twenty to twelve" – his handkerchief. "These are Yankees, and you pretend to be Englishmen" – waistcoat – "Whoever heard of an Englishman taking odds against an enemy? Stop! hear me out; what, you are determined, are you? Very well, boys, just as you please. I fought against the Yankees during the war (d—n me if I think any of *you* did!). I am a true Englishman; these Yankees are STRANGERS on our shores, and therefore entitled to kindness and protection. *You* are twenty, without the niggers; *they* are twelve. Boys (addressing us), do your best; I am on your side, and you are now a 'baker's dozen!'" The parties met. The Englishman dealt his blows right and left, and fought like a hero, as he was; and the colonists, sailors, lords, half-breeds, and negroes were routed![5]

This "performance" conveniently reveals probably more than would the unnamed plays the troupe had just performed. The Americans pitted themselves against the motley crew of Canadian "colonists" – Smith uses the word with disdain – in a

[5] Solomon Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years, Interspersed with Anecdotical Sketches, Autobiographically Given by Sol Smith* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1868), 40-41.

microcosmic power struggle. The fact that the Canadians included non-whites in their number, in Smith's eyes, set them on a lower level than his entourage and their British ally. Forming an allegiance of Empire on both sides of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, the Englishman entered the fray on the side of the Americans. As to the uneven numbers, it may be recalled that the American troupers sought out the Canadians in their own space and attacked them – a microcosmic act of empire in itself. The racially charged language, "niggers" and "half-breeds," adds to the imperial nature of the "performance" and outlines where the boundaries of inclusion into the empire were.

A different description of this boundary is depicted in the memoir of Henry Marie Brackenridge, son of Hugh Henry Brackenridge of Philadelphia College, American Revolution, and Whiskey Rebellion fame. Sent "down the river" to expand his horizons as a boy (he was quite young – under 10 – to be sent so far away with relative strangers in a dangerous country). The young Brackenridge passed three years at St. Genevieve in Spanish controlled Louisiana with a French-American family. It was a very unpretentious place, agriculture and religion predominated; a Kickapoo village was nearby with whom the French had interaction. French and Kickapoo children frequently played together, shooting bows and arrows and learning each others' languages. More akin to a syncretic Metís culture than a culture of empire, the environment at St. Genevieve had a lasting impact on Brackenridge for which he was grateful for the remainder of his life. The French and Indians had left impressions upon him which:

> [I]f not indelible, were yet sufficient to carry me a long distance through the temptations of vice and folly. I was taught to reverence my parents, to respect the aged, to be polite to my equals, and to speak the truth to every one. I was taught to restrain my temper, to practice self-denial, to be compassionate to man and beast, to receive without murmur or complaint what was provided for me, and to be thankful to God for every blessing.[6]

Here was a community relatively independent of the economic empire of the Atlantic world, where French settlers and Indians, at least, were in equilibrium. Brackenridge makes no mention of any formal performances other than strong adherence to Catholic ritual. By comparison, Sol Smith was certainly not without a strong sense of virtue, but this sense was laced with the rhetoric of a "white republican" empire.

The view of theater as a tool of empire and corruption persisted well into the nineteenth century in some quarters. As more circus and melodrama entrepreneurs appeared in response to the demands of a growing population, their reception was mixed. In Chillicothe, Ohio in 1815, an editorial condemned a recently arrived circus on much the same grounds itinerant theater troupes had been condemned in the colonial period:

> The principle object pursued by the conductors of the Circus is to enrich themselves at the expense of others. How far they have succeeded in their design in this place – what number of citizens have honoured them with their presence and favoured them with their support, we have not been particularly informed.
>
> Believing that these men a prosecuting an unlawful calling – one that cannot be defended on Scriptural grounds, or on principles of sound reason and good policy, we presume the good sense of the citizens in general would lead them to treat their exhibitions with that unqualified neglect and contempt which they so justly deserve.[7]

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[6] H.M. Brackenridge, *Recollections*, 32.

[7] *Chillicothe Weekly Recorder*, 2 August, 1815; quoted in Murray, *Circus!*, 127.

In the Quaker community of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, six members of a traveling circus were charged with witchcraft in the summer of 1829. They were accused of possessing:

> [the] Power of witchcraft, conjuration, enchantment and sorcery and being moreover persons of evil and depraved dispositions, and as magical characters having private conferences with the spirit of darkness, did . . . expose to the view of diverse and many people of the Commonwealth various feats, acts, deeds, exhibitions and performances of magic and witchcraft.

Here, it seems, the prosecutor must have copied the "conjurers'" playbill. The indictment continues, asserting that these performers were:

> Leaping over a horse through hoops, over Garters, and through a Barrel; Roman attitudes; Comic Still Dance, wherein the cloven Foot was palpably displayed; Flying by the Whole Company; Master Bacon riding upon his head instead of his Seat of Honour; wonderful Somerset from a Horse at Full Speed by Mr. Downie; Dropping from the Rope and Coming to Life, to the Great Mortification of Bystanders . . . Officer and Recruit, or Double Transformation; Flip Flaps and Cobbler's Frolic, to the evil example of all kindred spirits, for the Promulgation of the Infernal Arts, to the General Scandal and Delusion of the Human Species – to the Evil Example of all others, in like case offending and against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.[8]

The Quakers of Sunbury were not alone in their disdain for circus performances. One of the longest running and most famous of the early show elephants was "Old Bet." Purchased for $1000 by one Hackaliah Bailey of Somers, New York, Bailey took Old Bet on the road along with a collection of monkeys, bears, and perhaps a giraffe. His efforts were very successful, and used some of the proceeds to construct a three story brick "caravansary" in his hometown. On a trip to Maine in 1828, after passing through a Penobscot Indian village, a group of irate

[8] Ibid., 127-128.

Yankee farmers waylaid the party one morning before dawn. Apparently upset about the use of exotic animals to extract money from their community, they shot Old Bet to death.[9] Performances of this culture of empire, of which Bailey and Old Bet were a part, had reached their limit of reception in the north woods.

Generally, these traveling troupes – theatrical, circus, or menagerie, often a combination – met with rhetorical resistance but monetary support in the communities they visited. "Flip flaps" and "somersets" were frequently seen alongside melodramas and pantomimes such as *The Castle Spectre* or *Pizarro* (more on these below). Philip Astley and John Bill Ricketts both built theaters that facilitated equestrian shows with a circus "ring" *and* a pit with a stage for dramatic presentations. The post-revolutionary generation born in the early years of the nineteenth century, particularly those born in the "West," seemed more egalitarian-minded regarding these performances, for the most part. Even Edwin Forrest, whose portrayal of *Metamora* would make him an icon of the American stage later in the century, once resigned himself to traveling with a circus company in Cincinnati. Sol Smith, born in 1801 and reared in western New York, was one who shared Dunlap's desire for theatrical purity, but was less strident in disdaining other "entertainments."

In 1823, Smith's first year of theater management, he had been working with the young Edwin Forrest in Lexington, Kentucky. Forrest tried to get a contract with Smith even though he had previously committed to James Caldwell's company in New Orleans. Aware of the arrangement with Caldwell, Smith turned him down but was unable to convince him to return to New Orleans. Apparently feeling jilted and

[9] May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling*, 27; Murray, *Circus!*, 126-127, 129.

reticent about returning to Caldwell's company, young Forrest joined a traveling circus in Lexington. When Smith heard of this, "I called in at the Circus, and, sure enough, there was Ned in all his glory, surrounded by riders, tumblers, and grooms . . . To convince me of his ability to sustain his new line of business, he turned a couple of flip-flaps on the spot." Eventually, Smith prevailed upon him to return to Caldwell's theater, where he began his rise to international fame.[10] What was almost unthinkable to many performers in the metropolises of American empire on the east coast was accepted as part of the business in the Ohio Valley.

Gothic romanticism and empire were manifested in the circus and, as noted above, the circus often included the performance of plays. *The Castle Spectre* was a melodrama that was among the more frequently performed in the theaters and circuses of the Trans-Appalachian West. Written by Montgomery Gregory (M.G.) Lewis and first performed at the Theatre Royal in 1797, the title alone epitomizes Gothic melodrama. An excerpt from the Drury Lane *Prologue* captures the essence of the Gothic romanticism:

> Far from the haunts of men, of vice the foe,
> The moon-struck child of genius and of woe,
> Versed in each magic spell, and dear to same,
> A fair enchantress dwells, Romance her name.
> She loathes the sun, or blazing taper's light:
> The moon-beam'd landscape and tempestuous night
> Alone she loves; and oft, with glimmering lamp,
> Near graves new-open'd, or 'midst dungeons damp,
> Drear forests, ruin'd aisles, and haunted towers,
> Forlorn she roves, and raves away the hours!
> Anon, when storms howl loud and lash the deep,
> Desperate she climbs the sea-rock's beetling steep;

[10] Smith, *Theatrical Management*, 27-28.

There wildly strikes her harp's fantastic strings,
Tells to the moon how grief her bosom wrings,
And while her strange song chaunts fictitious ills,
In wounded hearts Oblivion's balm distills.[11]

On one hand, Romanticism provided inner resistance to the excesses of capitalism reminiscent of and heir to backwoods Puritanism and radical Whiggism. On the other hand, like Jeffersonian republicanism, which it accompanied into public consciousness, it acted to further democratize the economic empire that had come to North America. This is paralleled in the political-economic realm by the notion of "practical republicanism" and is quite apparent in these melodramas.[12] The entrepreneurial qualities so valued by the bourgeoisie became entwined with the archetypical character of folktales and songs in these genres, reflecting in the cultural sphere what was unfolding in the economic sphere.

Disdain for aristocracy, if not for the bourgeois economic class altogether, is found in these performances and the memoirs of those who practiced it. Sol Smith, for example, in the days after his Niagara encounter, was told that it was common for itinerant troupers to request the attendance of the Canadian magistrate at Little York (Toronto) to improve attendance it their performances. John Bernard, the bourgeois actor and manager from London and Boston, had built this "bespeak" into his itinerary when he traveled to Canada. Diplomatic protocol was not in Smith's repertoire, however, and after referring to the magistrate as "Mister" rather than "Your Excellency," he was summarily dismissed from his "bespeak" with the

[11] M.G. Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* (London: J.Bell, 1798), iii.

[12] For a discussion of this use of "practical republicanism," see John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), passim.

magistrate. Smith's cohorts derided his republicanism, but he held to his own, saying he would never again invite any nobility to the theater.[13]

Similar sentiments are found in the fiction of *The Castle Spectre*. The story revolves around the love affair between Angela, a humble maid who, unbeknownst to her, is heir to a sizable estate and a title; and the titled Earl Percy who, in love with Angela, presents himself to her as the lowly peasant Edwy so as not to intimidate her. That premise alone dispenses with the aristocratic class system, making it even more radical in its "natural environment" of England than it would have been in the U.S. But this depiction of humble virtue extends to a bond with the natural world. When Angela is brought to the castle of Lord Osmond, whom she does not yet realize was the murderer of her mother and possibly her father (his brother) as well, she is questioned by the Lord as to the nature of her continuing melancholy:

> Oh! my good Lord, esteem me not ungrateful! I acknowledge your bounties, but they have not made me happy. I still linger in thought near those scenes where I passed the blessed period of infancy; I still thirst for those simple pleasures which habit has made to me most dear. The birds which my own hands reared, and the flowers which my own hands planted; the banks on which I rested when fatigued, the wild tangled wood which supplied me with strawberries, and the village church where I prayed to be virtuous, while I yet knew of vice and virtue but the name, all have acquired rights to my memory and my love![14]

Angela goes on the express what many Americans would have considered their natural rights – the right to rise in society according to one's ability:

> And when in spite of nature's injustice, and the frowns of a prejudiced and illiberal world, I see some low-born but illustrious spirit prove itself superior

[13] Smith, *Recollections*, 41.

[14] Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 25.

> to the station which it fills, I hail it with pleasure, with admiration, with respect! Such a spirit I found in Edwy, and, finding, loved!"[15]

Percy / Edwy, Angela's love, expresses something similar a bit later in the play when visiting the humble cabin of Angela's step-father:

> The hut, where good-will resides, is to me more welcome than a palace, and no food can be so sweet as that which is seasoned with smiles---You give me your best; a monarch could give no more, and it happens not often that men ever give so much.[16]

Lord Osmond, on the other hand, embodies evil in the story. Not only is he the murderer of Angela's mother (who becomes the castle's spectre), he takes Angela hostage with the intention of forcing marriage on her. In the midst of carrying out his plot, he awakens from a nightmare – an epitome of Gothic melodrama – which he then relates to his "Negro" footman, Hassan. I relate the bulk of the text because of its melodramatic nature – it is, after all, a vision of the Christian Hell:

> A mere dream, say'st thou? Hassan, 'twas a dream of such horror! Did such dreams haunt my bitterest foe, I should wish him no severer punishment. Mark you not, how the ague of fear still makes my limbs tremble? Rolls not my eye, as if still gazing on the Spectre? . . . Let me not hear the damning truth! Tell me not, that flames await me! That for moments of bliss I must endure long ages of torture! Plunge me rather in the thickest gloom of Atheism! Say, that with my body must perish my soul! For, oh! should my fearful dream be prophetic! Hark, fellows! Instruments of my guilt, listen to my punishment! Me thought I wandered through the low-browed caverns, where repose the reliques of my ancestors! My eye dwelt with awe on their tombs, with disgust on Mortality's surrounding emblems! Suddenly a female form glided along the vault: It was Angela! She smiled upon me, and beckoned me to advance. I flew towards her; my arms were already unclosed to clasp her when suddenly her figure changed, her face grew pale, a stream of blood gushed from her bosom! Hassan, 'twas Evelina! Such as when she sank at my feet expiring, while my hand grasped the dagger still crimsoned with her blood! "We meet again this night!" murmured her hollow voice! "Now rush to my arms, but first see what you have made me! Embrace me, my bridegroom! We must never part again!" While speaking, her form withered away: the flesh fell from her bones; her eyes burst from their sockets: a skeleton, loathsome and meagre, clasped me in her mouldering arms! . . . Her infected breath was mingled with mine; her rotting fingers pressed my hand, and my face was covered with her kisses! Oh! then, then how I trembled with disgust! And now blue dismal flames gleamed along the walls; the tombs were rent asunder; bands of fierce spectres rushed round me in frantic dance! Furiously they gnashed their teeth while they gazed upon me, and shrieked in loud yell, "Welcome, thou fratricide! Welcome, thou lost for ever!" Horror burst the bands of sleep; distracted I flew hither: But my feelings – words are too weak, too powerless to

[15] Ibid., 26.

[16] Ibid., 46.

express them.[17]

So with this vision of Hell, Lord Osmond must confront the remainder of his days which, one would guess, are few. Such is the fate, the play's voice is saying, of those who do not walk the path of virtuous republican righteousness. Of course, the final tableau is one of virtue victorious and corruption vanquished. But upon closer inspection there are a number of points that reinforce the expansion of the white male empire republic.

One of the emerging national issues of the nineteenth century was whether or not slavery was to expand and whether "free blacks" would be tolerated in newly-incorporated territory. In the broader Atlantic world, the elimination of the Atlantic slave trade was being debated in Britain, where the play was written. Such a ban was written into the U.S. Constitution but not yet in effect and when it engaged in 1808, was apparently largely ignored. The Ohio Valley represented the dividing line between pro-slave and anti-slave – the divide between political control by the planter elite, or by a white republican electorate dominated by a *nouveau riche* who tended to be more politically involved to protect their interests. Blacks in the service of their masters south of the river were seen by a majority on both sides of the river as serving their appropriate function. In the North, there was the perceived threat of planters as landowners as well as free blacks. There was an inherent interest for these residents to make sure white republican, or "free-soiler" interests were protected in those parts of the country where blacks were not actual slaves and the plantation economy was illegal.

[17] Ibid., 67-69.

The Castle Spectre reinforces this arrangement by virtue of its depicting every one of the evil Lord Osmond's slaves as black, and the one servant who works to reunite the virtuous Angela and Percy is white (although his name is, curiously, "Motley"). Saib and Muley, the black servants with lesser parts, are depicted as relatively loyal, but ultimately incompetent and self-serving. They were to poison Percy's ally Kenric and failed; they were put in charge of guarding Percy and he escaped. Even the elderly and overweight priest who helped Angela through the secret passage hid under their noses. The most complex of the servant characters is Hassan, Osmond's footman. Hassan is an embittered and ultimately dangerous figure, whose kidnapping and misuse at the hand of European slave owners has instilled in him a hatred for whites. After Osmond relates his nightmare to Hassan, he says as an aside:

> Yes, thou art sweet, Vengeance! Oh! how it joys me when the white man suffers! Yet weak are his pangs, compared to those I felt when torn from thy shores, O native Africa! From thy bosom, my faithful Samba! Ah! dost thou still exist, my wife? Has sorrow for my loss traced thy smooth brow with wrinkles? My boy too, whom on that morning when the man-hunters seized me, I left sleeping on thy bosom, say, Lives he yet? Does he ever speak of me? Does he ask, "Mother, describe to me my father; show me how the warrior looked?" Ha! has my bosom still room for thoughts so tender? Hence with them! Vengeance must possess it all! Oh! when I forget my wrongs, may I forget myself! When I forbear to hate these Christians, God of my fathers! mayst thou hate me![18]

So the African servants are either incompetent or dangerously embittered, and in either case are not to be trusted or included in citizenship. This somewhat subtle maintenance of white supremacy while denouncing class and aristocracy plays to the

[18] Ibid., 69-70.

zeitgeist of American romanticism. The acquisition of wealth, so readily available to those who commit themselves to it, ushers in a new, more fluid class structure, just as investment in imperial projects in the British colonies had meant an expansion of the bourgeoisie. In this way, aristocracy could be plausibly denied because of the fluid structure, but money still bought power and influence. Turning once again to that theater manager and Jacksonian stalwart, Sol Smith, we find both liberal economic empire and its republican denunciation intertwined:

> "People may talk of the worthlessness of money – of its being the 'root of all evil,' and all that sort of thing; I say it is the talisman which unlocks all hearts; the balsam that heals all wounds; the creator of respect, esteem, friendship, love! Without it, a man is neglected, abandoned, and scorned; *with* it, he springs into rank, is courted, fawned upon, worshiped. Talk of respect gained by a long course of good deeds, and honest actions, and just deportment! Give the veriest wretch MONEY enough, and he may discard all the virtues, and yet retain the respect and admiration of the world. Money worthless! Nonsense. I have seen it unchain a criminal; change the made-up opinion of juries; sway the judge. The priest pretends to be laboring for the good of the souls of his flock: he is not – he is laboring for his fifteen hundred dollars a year. The patriot blusters and storms at "the powers that be" only to get the place of another, and with it the salary. The player – but why particularize, where ALL are striving for money! Money!! Money !!!"[19]

While this passage is written in a spirit of humor, it is the ironic humor of a Jacksonian democrat-republican. It is not a large step from this view to a denunciation of, say, "the Bank." Yet, by the time the reader has reached this passage in Smith's memoir, Smith has established himself as a citizen of the white republic and that "savages" and "niggers" are not included in it, except as they might serve the white master. In other words, the *zeitgeist* of early nineteenth-century America is one of a white-skinned, democratic-republican empire, and is reflected in its culture.

[19] Smith, *Recollections*, 38.

According to Smith, *Pizarro, or, Death of Rolla*, a William Dunlap adaptation of the German melodramatist August von Kotzebue's play, was one of the most popular stock plays in the Trans-Appalachian West during his career, (roughly 1815-1853).[20] Like *The Castle Spectre*, its messages are not uncritical of some of the more egregious aspects of imperial expansion in the New World. For example, the Spanish character of Alonso, raised by the priest Bartolomé de las Casas and an opponent of Spanish depredations against the Peruvians, possesses a "visionary enthusiasm, which forced him . . . to forego his country's claims for those of human nature." Playing off of the "Black Legend" of the Spaniards, Kotzebue (and Dunlap) have Alonso forsake the brutality of the Spanish empire, marry a native (Cora), and help defend the Inca against this imperial intrusion.[21] This theme brings out Dunlap's and Kotzebue's championing of compassion safely situated vis-à-vis the Catholic Spanish.

Gender and empire are addressed early on in the play, as the treatment of women is criticized through the voice of Elvira, the increasingly ambivalent wife of Pizarro. When Pizarro orders her to leave because there is to be a council of men, Elvira exclaims,

> O, men! Men! Ungrateful and perverse. O, woman! Still affectionate, though wronged. Those beings to whom in prosperity you look for added rapture, and on whose bosoms you seek for rest in adversity, when the pompous follies of your mean ambition is the question, you treat as play-things or as slaves. I shall remain.[22]

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[20] Ibid., 79. There was also a variation by Thomas Sheridan, which Dunlap notes in his version.

[21] William Dunlap, *Pizarro in Peru; or, The Death of Rolla. A Play, in Five Acts. From the German of Augustus Von Kotzebue. With Notes Marking the Variations from the Original* (New York: G.F. Hopkins, 1800), 12.

[22] Ibid., 13.

A female character is made to not only mock the "pompous follies of [men's] mean ambition," but to have her own voice as a woman, although the wife of a Conquistador and a member of the Spanish nobility. Later, when Pizarro takes Alonso – who he considers a traitor and mortal foe – prisoner with the intent of executing him, Elvira tells Pizarro he shall never have her again if he kills Alonso. Elvira's staunch support is validated as Alonso's virtue is on display when he is brought in chains into the presence of Pizarro and Elvira. His disdain for murderous conquest, his love of nature, of his native wife Cora, and his steadfastness in the face of Pizarro's promise to execute him paint the melodramatic scene of virtue – the same virtues represented in *The Castle Spectre* and other Gothic melodramas.

At the beginning of the denouement of *Pizarro*, Rolla, the "Peruvian chief," has substituted himself for Alonso as prisoner of Pizarro. Elvira enters the prisoner's tent expecting to find Alonso and finds Rolla. Giving him a dagger and asking him to murder Pizarro in his sleep, Rolla and Elvira enter his tent and find him, like Osmond in *The Castle Spectre*, in the throes of a dark dream, talking in his sleep of murdering Alonso and gleefully hearing his agonized cries, pleas for mercy, etc. Rolla convinces Elvira to leave the tent, wondering at his ability to sleep at all, when Pizarro is heard to mutter in his sleep, "Away! Away! Hideous fiends – tear not my bosom thus!" Pizarro has become another corrupt soul suffering the pre-death torments of hell in their sleep.[23]

The injustice that Europeans visited on Native Americans is the central theme of the play. This would seem, on its face, to contradict the argument being made here

[23] Dunlap, *Pizarro*, 64.

that theater assuaged the horrors of ethnic cleansing occurring in the Trans-Appalachian West during this period. But one must recall that the play's setting was removed in time, space, ethnicity, and nationality, enabling a sympathetic viewing of the "natives'" predicament without compromising the spirit of the democratized imperial project. Albany, Pittsburgh, Lexington, Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and smaller theaters in between were booming "frontier" towns profiting from the exploitation of new-found resources and markets. Indigenous peoples, and those who shared similar life-ways, were not considered to have truly legitimate interests and were swept aside. The Spanish-Inca conflict was a continent, a religion, and three centuries removed.

A performance of *Pizarro* by Sol Smith's strolling players in Columbus, Georgia in 1832 exemplifies this point. The theater in Columbus, like many buildings in the town, was a brand new one made from newly sawn lumber. Mirabeau B. Lamar, the future governor of Texas and friend of Smith, was in attendance. After the War of 1812, (fought in Georgia as the Creek War), the Muskogee (Creek) peoples ceded their lands in the central part of modern-day Georgia, retaining their lands along the Chattahoochee River, which included the future site of Columbus.[24] Muscogee County, where Columbus was the county seat, had only recently been acquired from the Creeks after a long process of wars, civil wars, and shady negotiations. It had only been incorporated six years earlier in 1826.[25] To lend an air of realism to his staged battle scenes, Smith hired twenty-four

[24] "Treaty with the Creeks," in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Charles J. Kappler, ed. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 263-268.

[25] A useful site with this and much more information on early Georgia can be found at: http://www.muscogeegenealogy.com/Muscogee/maps.htm

Creek Indian men to be the Peruvian army vis-à-vis Pizarro and the Spanish. The Indians were paid fifty cents and a drink of whiskey for their services. In Act II, the entry of the "Peruvian" leader Rolla was supposed to be greeted with a shout from the offstage crew. When the crew shouted, they were joined by the Indians, who "raised such a yell as I am sure had never before been heard inside of a theatre." But that was only the beginning. Smith was playing the role of the High Priest of the Sun, invoking that deity to bring a blessing onto Rolla and King Ataliba of the Peruvians. As he began his invocation, he heard a low humming sound – the Muscogees were joining in with him, and soon, the song "was quite overpowered by the rising storm of *fortissimo* sounds which were issuing from the stentorian lungs of the savages; in short, *the Indians were preparing for battle* by executing, in their most approved style, the Creek war-song and dance!" Rather than try to stop them, Smith and his colleagues simply followed the Indians' lead, after the women playing the Indian maidens "made a precipitate retreat to their dressing-rooms, where they carefully locked themselves in." Over the next half hour, Smith wrote, the Indians continued:

> [P]erforming the most extraordinary feats ever exhibited on a stage, in their excitement scalping *King Ataliba* (taking off his wig), demolishing the altar, and burning up the sun! as for Lem [Smith's brother] and I (*Rolla* and the *High Priest*), we joined in with them, and danced until the perspiration fairly rolled from our bodies in large streams, the savages all the time flourishing their tomahawks and knives around our heads, and performing other little playful antics not by any means agreeable or desirable.[26]

The stage hands dropped the curtain on the Indians, but they kept on until their songs and dances were done. Ironically, the numinous energy of indigenous performances,

[26] Smith, *Recollections*, 79.

long associated with the rituals of life – obtaining food, marriage, birth, death, etc. – overwhelmed the "civilized" performance of the Euro-American culture of empire.

Smith does not tell us what the performance meant to the Indians. It would be nice to know, since these Creek Indians were descended from a long line of Muskogee Indians living not only near the recently-founded town of Columbus, but had lived along the banks of the Chattahoochee River (now the boundary between Georgia and Alabama) and the other rivers of the region for many generations. Like Native Americans further north, they had been contending and working with the various imperial forces attendant on North America since the sixteenth century and had most recently struggled to beat back imperial encroachment during the War of 1812. Like the Pan-Indian movement led by Tenskwata and Tecumseh, the Creek "Red Stick" faction had fought against both Euro-Americans and their Lower Creek cousins who had allied with the whites. The destruction of their central village Tohopeka on the Tallapoosa River spelled the end of serious resistance to the expansion of the Euro-American empire. The ironic twist was that the lands that Colonel Andrew Jackson and the whites forced the Red Sticks to cede were lands belonging to the lower Creeks who had been the Euro-American allies. They were richer lands than the piney foothill region where the Red Sticks lived. By 1826, white encroachment and the extension of state law over the Creek lands forced another land cession, this one including the Chattahoochee Falls area.[27] The Euro-American town of Columbus was situated near those falls, long a commercial center previously

[27] Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 73-75; see also Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogee Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), passim.

centered at the Muskogees' Coweta Town. Because of its location, Columbus quickly became a boom town. Upon the arrival of Sol Smith's strolling troupe in 1832, it was where:

> [T]he cotton of the eastern part of the Alabama cession would find its inland market, and here lived the proprietors of the banks, warehouses, wharves, and steamships required to get the staple to its destination in the metropolis of Liverpool. Before the first Indian had given his name to a census taker, the capitalists of Columbus had laid plans for assuring that the Creek lands, as well as their produce, might pay them tribute.[28]

Euro-Americans took the Creek lands by force, legal manipulation, and deception in order to grow staple crops for the Atlantic market economy. The reader hardly needs to be reminded that those who were tilling the soil, tending the plants, harvesting the crop, cooking, cleaning, and serving those who usurped and enjoyed the wealth thus produced were chattel slaves sold on the same capitalist market as the staple crops they grew. This was the raw edge of the capitalist economic empire. In Columbus, Georgia, one evening in 1832, the white beneficiaries of empire were enjoying the melodrama *Pizarro*. Local refugees, displaced by the imperial economic process, were pathetically working as extras for four bits and a shot of whiskey – and yet their own numinous notions of performance upstaged a performance of the culture of empire, if only briefly.

As for the intended message of the melodrama itself, the Peruvians assume the role of the forces of light; the Spanish the forces of darkness. Rolla, Alonso, and

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[28] I quote this succinctly-worded passage from historian Mary Elizabeth Young because it was ahead of its time. Her dedication of the book to Paul Wallace Gates, her mentor at Cornell, who was also on the cutting edge of revising the Whig historical narrative in regard to Indian land policies supports this contention. See her *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 75.

Cora depict the virtues of rural life, family, and loyalty; Pizarro and his followers represent the evils of tyranny in the form of the "Black Legend" of the Spanish Catholic conquests and barbarity. In reality, the Peruvians, or Incas, were a highly organized society that resembled European city- and nation-states and were something of an empire in their own right. North American Indians east of the Great Plains were, by contrast, villagers that had been forced into an insecure existence, moving their villages of increasingly mixed-ethnic composition whenever the whites encroached upon them. This allowed Euro-Americans to more easily view them in a stereotypical light as nomadic savages who could not properly care for the land, and deemed unworthy of the most basic of rights, a right to their own land -- a right ironically sacrosanct in the jurisprudence of the empire.

The success of *Pizarro* in the Trans-Appalachian West is contrasted by the lack of success of another play by Ohio immigrant Joseph Doddridge, who wrote a short but conscientious meditation on the issue of brutality toward Native Americans. The Reverend Doctor Doddridge, whose play, *Logan, Last of the Race of Shikellemus, Chief of the Cayuga Nation*, is worth a brief look for its view inside the mind of an early reformer in the Ohio country. This play was, as it turned out, largely a closet play as it was rarely, if ever, performed, although it was published and reprinted as recently 1971. Doddridge's play features a group of soldiers preparing to meet Indians in battle, and the various views of whites towards Indians are featured in the conversation. Doddridge confronts head-on the issue of Indian rights and humanity. A sampling from the dialogue between the characters of Captain Furious, Captain Pacificus, and the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants reveals this. At this point in the

play, the military men are discussing the situation outside of Wheeling, Virginia in a scene Doddridge calls "Wheeling: A Militia Council of War" (spelling and usage from the original):

> Capt. Furious: [Why are the Indians] coming so near us?
>
> 2nd Lt.: They are still on their own ground.
>
> 1st Lt.: On their own ground! What ground can an Indian have? I would as soon apply to a buffalo for a right to the land over the river, as to an Indian. I could prove that he marked the earth with his feet, had eaten the weeds and brushed the bushes with his tail, and made paths to the salt lickns, and what has a Indian done more?
>
> Capt. Furious: An Indian is not worthy to be compared to a buffaloe: He is a wolf, or bear, that lives upon the destruction of everything about him. He is a beast of prey.
>
> 2nd Lt.: They have at least the right of possession of the country. Providence placed them here, long before the white people knew anything of this quarter of the earth.
>
> Capt. Furious: That is true, and if they had been worthy of its possession, they would have been continued in it; but they are Canaanites, whom Providence has doomed to utter extermination.
>
> 2nd Lt: I am no Moses, and am therefore not authorized to pass this dreadful sentence upon them.
>
> Capt. Furious: Neither am I a Moses; but I am a Joshua to execute the decree of their destruction, and although I cannot command the sun and moon to stand still; yet if my companions think as I do, this very day shall be long enough to finish some of them.
>
> Capt: Pacificus: Perhaps we had better take a little time for deliberation on this weighty concern. The Indians are not likely to leave their present encampments shortly, and we shall soon find means to discover their intentions.

Capt. Furious: What shall we wait for the tomahoc and scalping-knives of the Indians to convince us of their bad intentions! Are you not aware that they claim the very ground on which they stand?

[Discussion of atrocities on both sides, including those of the Paxton Boys in Pennsylvania.]

1st Lt.: The Paxton Boys did right. An Indian ought to be killed, he is naturally a murderer, and if not at war, it is only because he is chained down by fear.

[More discussion of the Indians' intent.]

Capt. Pacificus: Surely you will not kill women and children. This would be not only inhuman, but dishonorable.

Capt. Furious: I will kill all, nits will be lice, they have killed the traders and now blood for blood. No mercy ought to be showt them.

[Discussion of whether or not to attack without a declaration of war by government.]

1st Lt.: The criminal justice of our country, for killing Indians! WE are not afraid of that! All the sheriffs, magistrates and constables in the country could not take one of us. If they should attempt it we would soon shew them the effects of club law.

[Discussion of Indian retaliation. The militia votes on how to proceed, all vote to kill the Indians. The last word in the play is reserved for Shahillas, Chief of the Ottaways.]

Shahillas: The whites will destroy us. We have had our day, our night is at hand. The white men will have theirs, and then some strong nation will bring the dark night upon them. [29]

[29]Joseph Doddridge, *Logan, the Last of the Race of Shikellemus, Chief of the Cayuaga Nation. A Dramatic Piece, to Which is Added the Dialogue of the Backwoodsman and the Dandy, First Recited at the Buffalo Seminary, July 1st, 1821*; from a handwritten copy at the Ohio Historical Society. Eventually published by Doddridge in Virginia in 1823, reprinted Cincinnati: Robert Clark and Company, 1868; most recently reprinted Parsons, WV: McClain Printers, 1971.

Doddridge's willingness to lay the case out in such stark terms before the potential audience perhaps doomed the play to relative obscurity – it is probable that he knew it would not be played and meant it for the closet. In any case, like publications such as *Freedom's Journal* and later, William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, Doddridge's play confronts the status quo and gives voice to those who found Indian-hating to be a perversion of humanity. Nevertheless, at the end of the play, "Shahillas" acknowledges a seemingly ineluctable fate for the Indians, although he observes that the cycle of power will turn on the whites eventually. Unlike the popular play *Pizarro*, the Native Americans were not safely removed in time, space, and cultural context. *Logan* elicits the rawness of the conflict that was on the minds of every person in the Trans-Appalachian West and called attention to the brutality of the ethnic cleansing process. This was too real, too raw, and too true for a popular audience that ranged from those who silently condoned to those who advocated just the behavior Doddridge was questioning.

Conversely, John Augustus Stone's *Metamora*, *Last of the Wampanoags*, served to assuage the cognitive dissonance of the frontier's ethnic cleansing more in line with the psychological needs of the "democratized empire." What was needed was a rationale, vindication, and validation for the democratized empire-republic and this play provided that and more. As a result, it made the illustrious career of actor Edwin Forrest, who had commissioned a contest for an American-themed play and this was the winner. It became one of the century's most popular theatrical works. In many ways, *Metamora* defined an era of American history spanning the generation that lived between the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 and the appearance of

Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852, which revised and updated the conflicting forces in the Euro-American psyche. Metamora, a caricature of the historical Wampanoag leader Metacom or King Philip, represented the soul of the North American continent – a torchbearer, as it were – who passed his flame to Euro-Americans via this stage representation. "I have been on the mountaintop," Metamora told his audience, "where . . . the Great Spirit passed by me in his wrath." On this mountaintop, the imaginary Metamora of the Euro-American mind had taken up the spirit of nature through conquest, stating, "I had slain the great bird whose wing never tires, and whose eye never shrinks; and his feathers would adorn the long black hair of Nahmeokee," (Metamora's wife). The freedom of this spirit was unambiguous: "The Wampanoag . . . owns no master, save that One who holds the sun in his right hand."[30] And the feather that embodied the soul of North America would be passed on to the most virtuous of the white newcomers: Oceana, the play's heroine. A name rich in the Whig heritage of the British and Euro-American empires, Oceana receives the feather/soul and passes it on to the virtuous artisan/yeoman Walter, her beau.[31] In case it was not clear with the formation of the Saint Tammany societies and Mrs. Hatton's play in the 1790s, *Metamora* cemented the passing of the torch to white, male America as the possessors of North America.

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[30]John Augustus Stone, *Metamora, Last of the Wampanoags*, in Don B. Wilmeth, ed., *Staging the Nation: Plays from the American Theater, 1787-1909* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1998), 63.

[31]Ibid., 64. *The Commonwealth of Oceana* is the title of a political tract by James Harrington that had a significant influence on the rise of Whig ideology in post-Civil War England. Also, "Oceana" can be seen as subtly calling to mind the crossing of the ocean by the self-perceived "civilizing" forces of democracy and Christianity, a fundamental of the Whig historical narrative.

The democratizing aspect of the Euro-American empire is unambiguously seen through the characters of the benevolent bourgeois Sir Arthur and the plebian Walter. Their conflict with the more aristocratic Fitzarnold and Mordaunt would not have been lost on the Jacksonian audiences and performers of the Trans-Appalachian West. The plebian Walter's snub of the aristocrat Fitzarnold is symbolic of the Euro-American plebian rejection of the European class structure. Walter's threat of violence against the British aristocrat is not too strong an expression given that it was lived out in two wars within living memory of many in the audience. Indeed, the sentiment is captured in real life by Sol Smith's Canadian bar brawl described earlier.[32]

The unbridled pillaging of the natural resources of North America was entering unprecedented levels as Euro-American colonizers passed through the Cumberland Gap, over the Alleghenies, down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and north to the Great Lakes. While western "boatmen" such as the larger-than-life Mike Fink espoused the crude virtues of his "race," Forrest's audiences were hearing Metamora's expression of the Noble Savage's virtue in a land the Euro-American colonizers felt destined to inherit and exploit. Bravely, the Wampanoag caricature uttered, "The good man's heart is a stranger to fear, and his tongue is ready to speak the words of truth." He goes on to tap Christian rhetoric to defend harboring white fugitives fleeing an unjust prosecution. By comparison, most whites were depicted as corrupt:

[32]Ibid., 66.

> Do you not set a snare for [the Indians] that they may fall, and make them mad with the fire water the Great Spirit gave you in his wrath? The red man sickens in the house of the palefaces, and the leaping stream of the mountain is made impure by the foul brooks that mingle with it.

Metamora's virtue is cast against the foil of the British aristocrat's greed. And the decline of the indigenous populations were associated with "progress" and "development" of the land through clearing and plowing, concepts and practices that were both unbridled and unquestioned in the white world.

The Noble Savage, "Natural Man," passes his virtue to the Euro-American colonists, symbolized in the gift of the feather to the virtuous Oceana, and is combined with the democratic virtue of Walter to create a new race – the exceptional American. This exceptional American, the folkloric, mythical embodiment of virtue, would eventually be institutionalized in academe by historians such as George Bancroft, John Fiske, Frederick Jackson Turner and, more importantly, embraced by the citizenry through the national mirror of the theater stage, the silver screen, and television.

A similar situation obtained with regard to the "involuntary colonists," the African Americans, both slave and free. Admitting their equality was taboo; maintaining an imperial upper hand through elements embedded in Euro-American culture was the rule. Whites, as has been noted, had performed in blackface for some time, both on the stage and in the street, with the burnt cork possessing a variety of meanings. Beginning in the 1820s and accompanying the rise of the romantic conflation of folk and imperial culture in the United States, blackface performance came to be, in large measure, about the perpetuation of stereotypes regarding blacks. The culture of empire that was permeating and modifying folk culture in the

aftermath of the American Revolution added solo blackface performances to its repertoire by the late 1820s – a development that paralleled the rise of the circus and melodrama in the United States. Indeed, many circuses added minstrel shows to their repertoire of equestrian feats, gymnastics, menageries, and melodramatic plays.

Melodrama, the circus, and blackface performance were all beginning to come together in Noel Ludlow's exertions in the South in the late 1820s. Ludlow, Sol Smith's future partner and old stock player with the Samuel Drake company, worked toward the erection of a building in Louisville that would "answer for either dramatic or equestrian performances, or both."[33] Following the lead of Philip Astley in London and John Bill Ricketts in Philadelphia, Ludlow's plan included removable seats in the pit that would permit the area in front of the stage to be converted into a ring for the horses. Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice, the creator of the "Jim Crow" character that led to the century's blackface minstrelsy craze, had been a player in Ludlow's itinerant troupe when the theater in Mobile went up in flames taking their wardrobe, music, and a building in which Ludlow had one-half interest – ten days after Ludlow had let their insurance policy lapse.[34] The theater burned early Sunday morning, March 1, 1829. On Monday, a local committee met and resolved to assist in its rebuilding. Ludlow, who was married with four children and had just lost his life's investment, threw himself into the work. His troupe went off to play in Montgomery, but by May 2 the new Mobile theater was ready to open. They played into the summer taking benefits for every member of the troupe as well as the carpenters who

[33] Noah M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1966; orig. pub. St. Louis, 1880), 339.

[34] Ibid., 331-333.

were highly praised for their rebuilding work. It was at the end of this benefit period that one H. Purdy Brown arrived in Mobile with his equestrian performance, i.e., circus. Ludlow states in his memoir that he had previously made an arrangement to do a joint performance with Brown at the theater that burned in the interim. Instead, he reports, they performed three melodramas at the new theater, *Timour the Tartar*, *El Hyder*, and *Valentine and Orson*, although he seems to have misremembered the former as it was not published until 1850 and apparently not performed until 1860.[35] *El Hyder*, on the other hand, had been performed as early as 1818, and was an "extravaganza" set in India, the other end of the British Empire. Subtitled *The Chief of the Ghaut Mountains; a Grand Eastern Melodramatic Spectacle*, this play calls out for some attention in the present study. The setting is India, there is a civil war between a corrupt usurper (Rajah Hamet) and his virtuous challenger (El Haber) who is accompanied by his wife and son. The play calls not only for horses but an elephant, which would have been a scarce item in Mobile, Alabama in 1829. The presence of British sailors in support of El Haber, and the fact that it was being performed by an itinerant theater troupe in Alabama in the early days of the expansion of the plantation complex into that region all lend support to the even itinerant troupers and circus performers in peripheral areas of the early republic were purveyors of a culture of empire.

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35 Ibid., 337. John Oxenford and Shirley Brooks, *Timour The Tartar! Or, The Iron Master Of Samarkand-By-Oxus. An Extravaganza* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, 1850); information on the first performance date available at the "Literature Online" database; the durable URL is: http://gateway.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z000060189:0.

The Manichean characters of *El Haber* are typical of the melodrama genre, as are the threats to the innocent Zada and Cherriden, El Haber's wife and son. The British sailors, Mat Mizen and Harry Clifton play a role in rescuing these innocents from the evil Rajah Hamet. British (i.e., "white") superiority is asserted when Hamet's harem guard, Abensellah, surrenders to them at the sight of a brandished pistol. Mat Mizen finds this amusing and underscores the cowardice and inferiority of the Indian:

> Ha! ha! ha! why, then, what a precious soft Tommy chap you must be. Ha! ha! ha! who the devil would have thought you could have been so easily gulled! What! did you think I was in earnest, and going to smash your head-rail? Bless you, it was only in joke. We Englishmen know too well the blessings of liberty---their houses are their castles, and never will they infringe on the rights of others, which they would die to maintain themselves. Give us your hand, my hearty, and when next you meet an English sailor, remember, he is never to be dreaded but in battle.[36]

Abensellah is clearly depicted as a typically inferior "native" and the sailors are seen as a pair of virtuous, happy-go-lucky yeomen like those who captured André in Dunlap's play of the 1790s.

The virtue of the English is repeated near the end of the play as the combined forces of El Haber and the Englishmen assail Hasem's stronghold:

> Aye, to be sure---we British lads espouse the cause of all who are oppress'd: each true born Briton echoes forth the cry of freedom, and while a sword, a man, or guiuea lasts, surrounding nations shall all allow, that England is the first to combat in the cause of liberty.

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[36] William Barrymore, *El Hyder; the Chief of the Ghaut Mountains. A Grand Eastern Melo-Dramatic Spectacle* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, 1852). The stable URL for this work and its first performance date is: http://gateway.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z000056014:0.

The battle scene at the end is the "extravaganza" part of the performance with cannon, ramparts, various previously introduced characters depicted in success or victory depending on where their allegiance lay. At the end, with the prince hoisted upon a shield, the British flag is seen waving and "liberty" triumphant.[37] El Haber has few lines for a protagonist, but he represents the epitome of masculinity, bravery, as well as martial qualities. As noted, he and his wife and son provide the familial ideal typical of this combination of folktale and imperial rationale.

Like Columbus, Georgia, Mobile had been an entrepôt from pre-Columbian days. Known also as Maubila or Mauvila, it was also home to the Mobile branch of the Muskoghean peoples and was destroyed by Hernando de Soto's army in 1640, although it was apparently inhabited again by 1675.[38] The European infrastructure dated from 1702 when it was the colonial capital of the French colony of Louisiana.[39] As intermittently part of colonial France, Spain, Britain, and the U.S., as either part of Louisiana, West Florida or, by 1829, the state of Alabama, Mobile had witnessed a long parade of imperial interests passing through her strategic harbor. By the time of this performance, again like Columbus, the Muskogheans had been largely conquered and their villages either destroyed or consolidated. Some had already left for "Indian Territory" in the West. The capitalist merchants and planters who paid the admission to Ludlow's and Brown's extravaganza likely saw themselves in the "jovial, brisk, and free" flag-waving sailors Mat and Harry, perhaps fantasizing themselves as the

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[37] Ibid., 25.

[38] *The Old Mobile Project Newsletter*, 17 (Fall 1998), Center for Archaeological Studies, University of South Alabama.

[39] Jay Higginbotham, *Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711* (Mobile: Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977), 106-107.

larger-than-life El Haber. Meanwhile, their newly-bustling port town was being fed by wealth produced by slave-grown cotton from the Blackbelt region upstream. Humble as it may have been by later standards, this was a performance of, by, and for an economic empire that, rhetoric aside, had little compunction about expropriating the land and labor of others, at times with a publicly funded military force. Furthermore, this was a democratized empire that employed the rationale of virtue and the social mobility of a libertarian economic environment to hide the ultimately predatory nature of this expropriation.

Ludlow buttonholed Brown near the end of the benefit series at Mobile's new theater and asked him to join forces in presenting theater and circus extravaganzas in the Ohio Valley the coming season. Ludlow was convinced this would be a money-making combination. Brown agreed to meet Ludlow in Louisville in a few weeks, giving the latter time to secure an appropriate space and for Brown to play his circuit in Mississippi, Tennessee, and southern Kentucky. Ludlow sent his carpenter, a Mr. McConkey, ahead to secure a lot with a suitable structure or the materials to build such a structure. McConkey acquired a suitable location and proceeded to construct a building that would function for the planned performance combination. However, after two weeks of performances in Cincinnati in July, Brown backed out of the deal, much to Ludlow's chagrin. Brown, it seems, was not as optimistic about the combination of theater and circus as was Ludlow and elected to stick to his own circuit and head back east for the season. He would, however, soon return to the

Ohio Valley and the Southwest, and the circus would only increase its frequency in the Trans-Mississippi West in the coming years.[40]

T.D. Rice apparently left Ludlow's troupe around this time, reappearing in the historical record as part of Sol Smith's traveling troupe playing at the Columbia Street Theater in Cincinnati in the spring of 1830. Rice was "busy composing and arranging his *Jim Crow* songs which afterward raised him to the topmost wave of popularity, both in this country and England."[41] Ludlow observed that Rice's talent "consisted in his great fidelity in imitating the broad and prominent peculiarities of other persons, as was evident in his close delineations of the corn-field negro, drawn from real life, and for which he was justly celebrated in the latter portion of his career."[42] This small, itinerant troupe with whom Rice had been touring was an offshoot of the well-established Drake troupe working the Kentucky Theatre Circuit begun by Luke Usher with a theater in Lexington in 1808. Other managers such as James Douglass (son of David, of American Company fame in the colonial period), and William Turner expanded the circuit and Samuel Drake eventually took over the route in 1815.[43]

After the burning of the theater in Mobile, Rice apparently returned to Cincinnati where Drake's company was playing, which then went to Louisville by

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[40] Ludlow, 340-343. For a variation of the Ludlow/Brown story that focuses on the buildings themselves, see Marilyn Casto, *Actors, Audiences, and Historic Theaters of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 39.

[41] Smith, *Recollections*, 65. Smith says nothing of Rice's performing these songs, however. He was apparently still working on the Jim Crow act.

[42] Ludlow, 332.

[43] A number of studies rehash the creation of the Kentucky Circuit. The most succinct is that of John J. Weisart, "The Beginnings of the Kentucky Theatre Circuit," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly*, 34 (July 1960), 264-285.

May. Rice had been influenced by street musicians in New Orleans he had met while with yet another southern theater manager, James Caldwell, the same Caldwell who had Edwin Forrest under contract in 1823. Rice had interacted with street performers in New Orleans like Picayne Butler, George Nichols, and Old Corn Meal. The theater world of the Old Southwest was a small one, and all of these actors and managers worked with one another at various times. These performers variously played theaters and circuses, including H. Purdy Brown's Circus, and were known for their imitations of blacks, with the exception of Old Corn Meal who *was* black and who never left New Orleans.[44] By May of 1830, having studied and learned from these men and others and, as Ludlow pointed out, having a unique talent for imitation, the itinerant, mediocre actor Rice was ready to "Jump Jim Crow." The first known advertisement of his Jim Crow act appeared in Louisville newspaper on May 22, 1830.[45] This act would change the face of American culture; the complexities of the early idiom require more space than is available here to survey. However, a succinct summary can be made of this uniquely American performance genre which, unlike the ideologically-oriented American culture William Dunlap, Noah Webster, and others had sought, was a spontaneous and subtle questioning of power manifested, as W.T. Lhamon writes, in the "slashing" of an "extravagant and wheeling stranger." The subdued and obedient "Sambo" – as seen in characters like "Mungo" in *The*

[44] For a brief study of Old Corn Meal, a locally celebrated street performer in New Orleans, see Henry Kmen, "Old Corn Meal: A Forgotten Urban Negro Folksinger," *Journal of American Folklore*, 75: 275 (January – March 1962), 29-34.

[45] Ibid., 36. *Louisville Public Advertiser, 22 May, 1830.*

Padlock – stepped away from his subservience and into the untamed shoes of Jim Crow.[46]

Other performers had adapted African American-"isms" to the stage before this. English performer Charles Matthews had studied black songs, folklore, and sermons in the early 1820s. While watching a performance of the African Theater Company, an African American resident theater company in New York, he heard the crowd stop a black actor playing Hamlet and demand that he sing "Possum up a Gum Tree." Matthews used African American-sourced material in his act, "A Trip to America," but it did not have the impact that Rice's "Jim Crow" songs had.[47]

Literary scholar W.T. Lhamon, Jr. has made a substantial contribution to research on Rice and Jim Crow not only through his monograph on blackface performance, *Raising Cain*, but his recently published collection, *Jump Jim Crow*. This book includes a brief biography of Jim Crow's career and, more importantly, previously unknown and unpublished songs, plays, and speeches written by Rice that he performed as Jim Crow. This collection is invaluable in analyzing the presence of both an imperial culture and a folk-rooted dissent directed at that culture in the genre of what was called at the time "Ethiopian Delineators," later known simply as a "Nigger Show." Surprisingly, scholars have been slow to incorporate this material, published in 2003, into any cultural analysis of the nineteenth-century U.S.[48] What

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[46] Lhamon, "Introduction," in *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2003), 1-93.

[47] Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Oxford University press, 1974), 26. For the African Theater Company, see Marshall and Mildred Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 28-48.

[48] I have presented with Lhamon's students at conferences, but I've yet to see an extensive study to come out of his new material.

follows is an analysis of this material as an artifact of a syncretic culture that combined empire and folk elements, and to many different audiences for different, often conflicting, reasons.

The significance of the Jim Crow character is not only that this character was pregnant with a stereotypical concept of racism and white supremacy, but that he was also pregnant with a cross-racial democracy that continues to haunt the dreams of the powerful.[49] Lhamon's collection of Jim Crow lyrics, plays, and speeches from both sides of the Atlantic – Rice toured England and Ireland in the second half of the 1830s – provide insight into this unruliness. Rice, and for that matter copycat performers, wrote and rewrote lyrics to the classic Jim Crow theme that began:

> Come listen all you galls and boys
> I's jist from Tuckyhoe,
> I'm goin to sing a little song,
> My name is Jim Crow
> Chorus:
> Weel about and turn about and do jis so,
> Eb'ry time I weel about and jump Jim Crow.

African American folk elements fill these lyrics, as does the "Mike Fink" keel boatmen lore of the Trans-Appalachian frontier, both of which represent an unruliness that harkens back to the Stamp Act riots and resistance to press gangs on the streets and wharves of Boston in the 1760s. But in Jacksonian America, the rhetoric was laced with African American dialect:

> I sit upon a Hornet's nest, / I dance upon my head,
> I tie a Wiper [viper] round my neck / And den I goes to bed
>
> Dere's Possum up de gumtree / An Raccoon in de hollow,

[49] Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*, 10-11.

Wake Snakes for June bugs / Stole my half a dollar.

The blackface mask, in these early days of Jim Crow, provided a screen for calling into question the social order, politics, and general assumptions of the day. It was a modern version of the traditional folk culture's "carnival," where society was turned upside down, if only for a day. In this selection, there is perhaps a concern about loosing jobs in the North to whites, whose new-found honesty will put the legendary Chief Constable of New York Jacob Hays out of work:[50]

> I'm berry much afraid of late / Dis jumping will be no good.
> For while de Crow are dancing, / De Wites will saw de wood.
>
> But if dey get honest, / By sawing wood like slaves
> Der'es an end to de business, / Ob our friend Massa Hays.[51]

The ethnic, racial, and class-based aspects are central features of the empire invading the Trans-Appalachian country in the early nineteenth century. Free blacks and slaves, displaced Indians, and poor whites represented a growing "mudsill" class, or *lumpenproletariat* that had little to gain from the empire's libertarian economics. Doors open to white males who were willing to ply the trade winds of capitalism offered no alternatives – it was empire, poverty, or resistance. The early Jim Crow material offered a type of resistance that, from a bottom-up perspective, would have rung true:

> I'm so glad dat I'm a niggar, / An don't you wish you was too
> For den you'd gain popularity / By jumping Jim Crow
>
> Now my brodder niggars, / I do not think it right,

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[50] There is a brief summary of Jacob Hays in *The New York Times*, 10 January, 1892. See also Augustine Costello, *Our Police Protectors: A History of the New York City Police Force* (New York: by the author for the NYC Police Pension Fund, 1885), Chapter 4, Part 3, available online at: http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/state/police/ch4pt3.html.

[51] Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*, 98.

Dat you should laugh at dem / Who happen to be white.

Kase it dar misfortune, / And dey'd spend ebery dollar,
If dey only could be / Gentlemen ob colour.

It almost break my heart, / to see dem envy me,
An from my soul I wish dem, / Full as black as we.

What stuff it is in dem, / To make de Debbil black
I'll prove dat he is white / In de twinkling of a crack.[52]

White Americans of the post-revolutionary era saw Brother Jonathan and other non-British characters reflected on the stage. But by 1830, this mudsill culture that spread throughout the realm of empire – British and Euro-American – had a decidedly darker hue. These verses are from a Jim Crow broadside titled, on one side, "Jim Crow, Still Alive!!!" and on the other, "Dinah Crow," two songs probably meant to be sung in tandem. This excerpt is from the "Jim" side, and expresses empire from the view of a "lowly" soldier:

I listed in de army / An sarve Uncle Sam,
Any other service / Aint worth a damn.
. . .
At New Orleans town / De British went to teal,
But when dey seel ol Hickory, / Day took to dere heel.
. . .
Lord how dey cut dirt, / An didn't stop to trifle.
For dey didn't like de sight / ob de dam Yankee rifle.
. . .
I'm a touch of the snapping turtle, / Nine-tenths of a bull dog.
I've turned the Mississippy, / All for a pint of grog.
. . . .[53]

The Jim Crow phenomenon was, like most challenges to power, swallowed up in the larger culture of empire. The folk elements of resistance that Jim Crow

[52] Ibid., 98-99.

[53] Ibid., 103. The ellipses represent where Rice would have sang the "wheel about an turn about" chorus.

expressed became caricatured into a kind of commercialized conformity by 1840 in the phenomenon of the blackface minstrel show. By 1848, when the minstrel show – not the early Jim Crow shows – had become a staple of American public culture, Frederick Douglass's comment on whites in burnt-cork was that they were "the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens."[54] Since the popularization of the African American civil rights movement of the last forty years or so, this has been the more widely accepted view of minstrelsy. But for more than a century prior to that, popular views of the minstrel show were much more positive. This is captured in Carl Wittke's preface to his 1930 monograph on minstrelsy, *Tambo and Bones*: "Happy memories of the burnt cork semi-circle, gathered during barnstorming student days, are responsible for an abiding interest and a real love for the old-time minstrel show."[55] This version of minstrelsy was the result of an acculturation process that operates on elements opposed to empire, as the rebelliousness of the early Jim Crow material was. But by the 1850s, the internal forces tearing at the fabric of the Euro-American empire disrupted the acculturation process as once again, one empire was split in two opposing factions.

Ritual theorists argue that one of the primary purposes of dramatic ritual performance in human history has been to minimize factionalism by bridging social

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[54] Frederick Douglass, *The North Star* (27 October, 1848).

[55] Carl Wittke, "Preface," in *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), vii. Lest it be thought that Wittke was a white supremacist, I would add that as a young man he performed as a troubadour and took an abiding interest in the rights of African Americans and women. See his blurb on the Case Western Reserve website: http://studentaffairs.case.edu/awards/wittke/biography.html.

contradictions.[56] In a country conflicted to the degree that the U.S. was in the 1850s -- with the question of slavery at the forefront of political debate; a "democratic" nation that denied citizenship to large numbers of its residents; a nation founded on "freedom" yet largely dependent economically on the plantation system of slavery; a litigious nation championing the sanctity of private property and contract yet ignoring the property rights of native groups and breaking every treaty ever made with them -- the ability of theatrical performance to assuage this cognitive dissonance was overwhelmed. Performances in the 1850s began to morph into war, especially in that part of North America where the status quo was being challenged both internally and externally: the Great Plains.

The first performances of the culture of empire west of the Missouri River were military band concerts held at Fort Leavenworth in that part of "Indian Territory" which became, after 1854, Kansas Territory.[57] Like Fort Pitt fifty years earlier, this fort headquartered an army that served the expansionist interests of the empire's policymakers in Washington, D.C. It had been established at the "elbow" of the Missouri River in 1827 to supply troops engaged in wresting control of the central plains from indigenous Americans. This was at a time when both the fur trapping industry and commerce with Mexico had a nexus there. Fur trappers and traders heading up the Missouri or bringing their furs down from the northern Rockies as

[56] Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), 150.

[57] The classic description of the process that took the region from "Indian Territory" to the state of Kansas is Paul Wallace Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts over Kansas Land Policy, 1854-1890* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954).

well as traders plying the Santa Fe Trail sought and received protection from the federal government through the soldiers at Fort Leavenworth.[58]

The first newspaper record of one of these concerts describes a performance for the residents of the nascent town of Leavenworth at the Kansas House hotel in May, 1855 by the military band of Company E, U.S. Dragoons, Sgt. Johnson conducting.[59] The first civilian performance in Kansas Territory appears to have been a show for a mix of lower class Euro-Americans and Irish immigrants, many of whom were soldiers stationed at the Fort. Well's Minstrels, a traveling troupe of "Ethiopian delineators," presented their show of low comedy, skits, and songs, i.e., a blackface minstrel show, on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1856. While this later show would not have had the edge of the mudsill class's unruly and satirical humor than Rice's Jim Crow shows of the 1830s, the troupe did express a sort of rebellion by absconding without paying for their playbills, an act that was nearly a cliché for an itinerant theater troupe by this time.[60]

Nationally, the popularity of the blackface minstrel show peaked from the 1840s through the 1870s, with a niche fan base continuing until well after World War II, it looms large in the American past. Minstrel plays, skits, and songs were common in theatrical touring companies throughout the U.S. during the mid-nineteenth century. The blackface minstrelsy show as differentiated from the subversive early Jim Crow shows, evolved in two separate events in 1839. One was initiated by Dan

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[58] A useful history of Fort Leavenworth can be found in John W. Partin, ed., *A Brief History of Fort Leavenworth, 1827-1983* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 1983).

[59] *Kansas Weekly Herald*, 11 May, 1855; hereafter *KWH*.

[60] Ibid., 22 March, 1856.

Emmett in New York City, the other by Edwin P. Christy in Buffalo; both put together blackface shows that consisted of a four-piece ensemble. Adopting the moniker, "The Virginia Minstrels" and "The Christy Minstrels" respectively, the instant success of these shows led to widespread imitation throughout the U.S. and even in England and Ireland. With a banjo and fiddle in the center and tambourine and "bones" on the ends, these mixtures of music, comedy, dancing, and farcical drama were a huge success and, to many observers, redefined the popular entertainment of the nation. While Jim Crow was big, the minstrel show gave rise to a genre that, by the end of the century, sometimes featured a full-blown brass band but still the main characters of "Tambo" and "Brudder Bones" on each end of the growing semi-circle. But by 1850 the minstrel show format was fixed, with the first part being the semi-circle and the second part, which was billed as the "hoe-down" delineator part, featuring solo dancers taking turns while the others played or clapped. Sometimes a third part featuring a farce or burlesque was featured. More often the last two parts were combined in an "olio" portion of the evening's entertainment.[61]

Minstrel shows were often part of circuses as well, and only slightly more common. On Monday, July 28, 1856, "Washburn's Great American Colossal Circus" came to town advertising two shows with three clowns, string and brass bands, and featuring "Shi-na-poh-mah, or the Winged Bird – the only aboriginal equestrian of the Arena in the world." The show also included Sac and Fox Indians.[62] This only a few months before the Iowa, Delaware, and the Confederated Peoria, Kaskaskia,

[61] Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 147.

[62] *KWH*, 26 July, 1856.

Wea, and Piankeshaw trust lands, originally given to them in perpetuity, were to go on sale, the Delawares' scheduled for October 20, 1856.[63] The Sac and Fox featured in this circus were likely recruited from the nearby reserve. The lands given to Indians, who were already some one thousand miles from their traditional homelands in the Old Northwest, Mid-Atlantic, and New England regions, were about to be taken from them again.[64]

Leavenworth rapidly expanded with pro-slave Missouri immigrants during the height of "Bleeding Kansas." In November of 1856, "Monseur [sic] Gabay" and his "Dramatic Troupe" came into town from Weston, Missouri with their "farces, drama, [and] impersonations of human nature" – most likely a reference to "Ethiopian delineation."[65] They played for crowded houses that fall and desired to remain in town for awhile, but M. Gabay lamented the lack of good facilities.[66] This shortcoming was alleviated, although it is unclear how, but M. Gabay's complaint spurred some sort of action and a room called the "Leavenworth Theatre" was proclaimed to be an "elegant establishment" for the purposes of Gabay's players and their Kansas amateur "supers."[67]

The following summer, circuses and theater troupes were commonplace in this part of the Missouri River valley. "Sands, Nathan and Company," a "French American Circus," as well as the New England Bards and the Thayer family were

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[63] Ibid., 30 August, 1856.

[64] For an excellent summary of the changing possession of lands in Kansas Territory, see Gates, *Fifty Million Acres*, 11-47.

[65] *KWH*, 1 November, 1856.

[66] Ibid., 29 November, 1856.

[67] Ibid., 4 December, 1856.

providing public entertainment ranging from the plebian to the bourgeois concert hall, such as it was.[68] That fall, a theater space dubbed "Melodeon Hall," on the third floor of a building on Cherokee Street between Main and Second, was constructed at a cost just over fifteen thousand dollars. This space, which would seat three hundred, was available to rent at twenty-five dollars a night.[69]

In short, it followed the same pattern of Ohio and Mississippi Valley theaters – local Thespian enthusiasts facilitating the performances of traveling troupers, hopefully to secure at some point a resident company. Performances ranging from circus acts like tumblers and equestrian shows to minstrel shows to melodramas to "legitimate" stock plays were standard fare. While each genre had its champions and detractors, they were not mutually exclusive – one might watch a melodrama or an old "legitimate" stock play like *School for Scandal*, followed by an "Ethiopian farce" with a song or short entr'acte. The main difference between Leavenworth theater and those further east was its role as the primary city and entrepôt of "Bleeding Kansas" – the struggle between the two opposing forces of empire for the expansion of the plantation complex of slavery.[70] In spite of this difference, at Leavenworth the theater performers remained the "camp-followers of the imperialists," performing nearly in the physical shadow of the military presence in the region, and catering to soldiers stationed there.

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[68] Ibid., 20 June, 1 August, 5 September, 1857.

[69] Ibid., 17, 24 October, 1857.

[70] Numerous studies of "Bleeding Kansas" exist, the most recent is Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

Theater performers, by and large, were of the itinerant variety, although locals did fill in the gaps to a great extent – especially at a frontier locale like Leavenworth in the 1850s. Performers from the East were hesitant to travel all the way to Leavenworth up the Missouri River. The western circuit, as it had existed since the Kentucky Circuit days, typically turned south at St. Louis and the majority of players did not venture further west until after the Civil War. But some did, and according to the reports of Leavenworth newspapers, they were usually welcomed with good attendance at their performances. One account highly critical of entertainment in Leavenworth, however, characterized the majority of the players who performed locally as "merciless mountebanks" who "mouth a sentence as a cur mouths a bone." Leavenworth residents, the critic continues, would rather pay to see "Negro witticisms" and good music than bad drama.[71] This account reflects the growing disillusionment with "mixed" theater that had been a complaint of bourgeois crowds for some time and a rising desire for venues that presented exclusively "highbrow" entertainment.[72]

Bourgeois culture was in short supply on the leading edge of empire in Leavenworth. "Legitimate" entertainment, divorced from the "lower" varieties, had been a goal of the upper segments of society on both sides of the Atlantic for much of the century at that point. So when George Burt and his wife Agnes arrived in Leavenworth from St. Joseph, Missouri in the spring of 1858 as experienced and respected Thespians, hopes were raised among those desiring such reforms. The

[71] *Leavenworth Daily Tribune*, 4 April, 1862.

[72] The development of this division is the subject of Lawrence Levin, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Burts, according to one local newspaper, had come to Leavenworth as harbingers of "respectable" society with reputations among the "highest theatrical circles in the Union." Mrs. Burt was purportedly in "the best social circles." George Burt had designed Smith's Theatre in St. Joseph, so had considerable experience in theatrical matters compared to the other residents of Leavenworth, Kansas Territory.[73]

The tension between pro- and anti-slave people on the Kansas frontier is hard to over-state. A song that was performed at Smith's Theatre in St. Joseph around this time, titled "The Kansas War and Other Matters," has been preserved in the Missouri Historical Society, and a sampling of its verses reveals some of this tension:

> I believe the border ruffians are filling up your towns,
> I believe the Doniphan Tigers are a husky pack of hounds,
> I believe the only difference – Abolitionists and Free Soilers;
> Is the one will steal your niggers, and other will steal your dollars
> But oh the woe these chaps will feel,
> When the devil gets them down, they'll squirm like an eel.
>
> I believe that Northern folks believe all the Southern people
> Work Niggers in a yoke with a ring and a steeple;
> They thing it ar'nt right for one man to work another,
> While their sisters pail the *Ceows* – they make Cooks of their Mother,
> But oh the woe the grief they feel
> For everything that's black with tar on the heel.
> . . .
> I believe in good plain dress – in clothes as well as speaking,
> And if I must confess – I look for some trick sneaking,
> When I see folks put on airs in religion or politeness,
> To hide a cloven foot neath smirks of polish'd brightness,
> For oh St. Jo., you all ought to know,
> The things I have sung about are just exactly so.[74]

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[73] *Kansas Weekly Herald*, 20 March, 1858.

[74] "An Original Comic Song, written by Saxton, entitled *The Kansas War and Other Matters*, as sung at Smth's Theatre, by J.H. Thompson. (In the costume of a Returned Soldier. Tune – 'Good Old Days of Adam and Eve'"; in Box 1-4, "Music Collection," Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

I have not been able to determine if this song was sung as part of a blackface show or not, but while it favors the pro-slave camp, it does not really let them off the hook either. This kind of double-edged commentary was typical of minstrel shows.

In honor of the Burt's arrival in Leavenworth, a new theater had been fixed up in their honor by H.T. Clark and Company at the corner of 3rd and Delaware Streets. "Fitted up in real city style," there was a stage with scenery, with an elevated floor sloping toward the back of the hall and seating for five hundred souls. Burt's Union Theater, as it was eventually known, soon became the primary venue for bourgeois theater in Kansas Territory. The newly remodeled theater opened on Tuesday night, March 23, 1858 with *The Drunkard,* followed by "other" entertainment where the Burts "sustained their high reputation." *The Drunkard*, written by W.H.S. Smith and debuted in New York in 1844, was one of the most popular of the "reform" plays that appeared with increasing frequency in the middle years of the century. This play, for that matter this sub-genre, represented a recycling of a similar vein of performance in the colonial period epitomized by *George Barnwell*. Where *Barnwell* had represented combination of a folksong with the market economic goal of productivity and loyalty in apprenticeship, *The Drunkard* utilized the melodramatic formula that combined folktale with the bourgeois goal of worker productivity. There is a fall from idyllic nature to hopeless despair caused by human frailty and the dastardliness of the villain, followed by heroic and miraculous restoration to virtue and harmony through personal determination and divine intervention. In this case, the "hero" of the story, Edward Middleton, virtuously wins the heart of fair Mary, in spite of the machinations of the villainous lawyer, Greer. Edward and Mary are married, have a

daughter, Julia, and Edward soon begins drinking. Greer preys on Edward's weakness for the cup, and the hero begins the downward spiral of alcoholism. Edward moves to New York, where his despair reaches new depths culminating in a dramatic *delerium tremens* scene. A wealthy benefactor then takes Edward into his care, where he miraculously recovers his sanity. Greer is sent off to prison for forgery. Mary, Edward and Julia are reunited in the final tableau, where Edward sits at the table, one hand on the Bible, one pointed to the sky, as Mary and Julia lovingly look on. The pathos of alcoholism is captured in the play, as is the plight of the innocent victims.[75]

The reform movement in America, growing out of the "Second Great Awakening" and the much-revered Seneca Falls, New York reformers' conference of 1848, had supporters in frontier communities, mainly women. A plan for reforming "drunkards" was one of the chief goals of reformers and a group known as the "Washingtonians," a kind of nineteenth-century Alcoholics Anonymous, emerged. The need for such a plan, as many saw it, was dire. Leavenworth's first directory, published in 1857, lists twenty saloons for a town that could not have contained much more than two thousand souls, though it was growing rapidly. Those wishing to establish profitable and "respectable" businesses, like a newspaper publisher, would want to see plays such as *The Drunkard* performed in the town. The business-owning classes supported the temperance movement and stories like the one depicted in *The Drunkard* were seen as models for productive workers. Edward inherited his money

[75] William Henry Smith, *The Drunkard: or, the Fallen Saved! A Moral Domestic Drama* (Boston: Jones Publishing House, 1847), 1-50.

in the play, but the mythos of economic empire of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps to become a successful entrepreneur or, perhaps, a captain of industry as Horatio Alger would later have it, was at the heart of plays like *The Drunkard*. The important distinction here is that not all workers would actually achieve the promises set forward in this myth. But the *prospect* of that financial success was the driving force behind the expansion of the American empire. To limit the growth of the "empire republic" was seen as limiting opportunity to achieve the "American dream" and the alcoholic citizen-worker undermined the mythos of expansion and empire. The image of the productive worker, struck down by alcoholism but saved by the intervention of God, friends, and family, sent the message to working class society that alcoholism could be overcome.[76]

The initial success of the Burts' theater led to further improvements. In April of 1858, a new drop curtain of red, white, and blue bunting was installed as well as a marble pavement stone at the foot of the stage that read simply, "Union."[77] Kansas Territory was on the national stage as an experiment in "popular sovereignty" as the vehicle for determining its "slave" or "free" status as outlined in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. And while the sentiment in Leavenworth was predominately pro-Union, it was also predominately pro-slavery. Originally settled by Missourians from over the border in Weston, the early population of the town took the "border state" view which embraced slavery while eschewing secession. Indeed, the *Kansas Weekly*

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[76] For a discussion of the alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century, see W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). See also Jeffrey D. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1993), 61-88.

[77] *KWH*, 24 April 1858.

Herald reported in February of 1858 that the Kansas territorial legislature was considering a bill that would free all "Negroes" within its boundaries. This "Nigger Bill," as the editor termed it, would trample underfoot the Constitution (the three-fifths clause) and the Supreme Court (*Dred Scott v. Sanford* [1857]). "Do not," this editor implored, defy constitutional law and justice and "set all the Negroes free among us."[78] The majority of newspapers in town were pro-slavery although it might be more appropriate to characterize their (mythic) views by quoting the *Weekly Journal*'s motto: "Kansas, State Rights, The Union, and the Rights of the People."[79] After its founding in 1858, the *Leavenworth Daily Times* was the primary anti-slavery or "free-soil" paper in town that frequently railed against Missouri "ruffians" and the rampant voter fraud that characterized "Bleeding" Kansas. The issue of slavery, then, was another of those dissonances that theater was called upon to attenuate, and one which went beyond theater's capacity to alleviate.

In Leavenworth, theatrical performance began to occur with some consistency at the makeshift "Melodeon Hall," on Cherokee Street, in the spring of 1858. Mr. and Mrs. D.L. Scott began singing to "large crowds" in April and by May were featuring some of the standard melodramas of the day. Advertising themselves as "Scott's Theatre," the Scotts hired professional players such as Emily Mestayer and C.R. Thorne, both from theatrical families that had toured with the Smith and Ludlow troupe that had been based in St. Louis and recently discontinued. These performers could be found as readily at the Melodeon as at the Union, although the Union

[78] Ibid., 2 February 1858.

[79] "State Rights" is often synonymous with pro-slavery during this period.

received the lion's share of press reviews. Indeed, the hiring of "stars" who were touring in the West was becoming commonplace as the "star system" replaced the old stock company as the standard theater business model.[80] Local talents were as scarce as they were dubious and in any case, the public seemed to appreciate fresh and skilled players on the stage.

Apparently, the Burts were not above "Ethiopian delineation" – the blackface farce of *Toodles* was performed on March 25, 1858 at the Union Theater.[81] In May of 1858, a touring blackface minstrel show calling itself "Durant's New England Bards" appeared at the Union Theater in Leavenworth. An advertisement for this troupe appeared with the curious motto: "Unfurl the standard to the breeze, raise the glorious ensign high. Shout aloud for victory, onward is our Battle Cry."[82] Blackface performance, in this case, seems to have been completely acculturated to an imperial view.

A fire destroyed much of Leavenworth's downtown area on July 15, 1858. It apparently began around midnight in the second floor dressing room of the Union Theater, leaving only Melodeon Hall as the lone theater space in town. A southwest wind reportedly sent the fire down Delaware Street until it was finally dowsed by a bucket brigade aided by a thunderstorm at 2:00 AM.[83] C.R. Thorne and Company

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[80] *KWH*, 24 April, 18 May 1858. Both theaters were advertising and competing for an audience in the spring of 1858. Individual professional players in almost every case would have come to Leavenworth during a break in their tour with the Smith and Ludlow troupe headquartered in St. Louis or a traveling minstrel show. See Smith, *Theatrical Management*, and Noah M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*.

[81] *KWH*, 27 March, 1858.

[82] *KWH*, 29 May 1858.

[83] *Leavenworth Weekly Journal*, 15 July, 1858.

were performing there in July. The Burts, supported by the bourgeois contingent of business owners in the town, had support in efforts to build a new theater on Shawnee Street, which they hoped to complete by mid-September.[84] It turned out to be November before the new National Theatre opened, it turned out, at Fourth and Delaware Streets. "Joe Berch's Minstrels" were advertised at what was now (falsely) claiming to be the only theater west of St. Louis.[85] The National Theatre debut of manager George Burt followed with *The Stranger, Lady of Lyons*, and *The Drunkard*, the first two being stock plays of the "legitimate" theater of the Atlantic culture of empire.[86] Also after the fire, D.L. Scott began presenting shows in a room at Third and Delaware that became known as Stockton Hall. Both the future President, Abraham Lincoln (1859), and his assassin, John Wilkes Booth (1863), would appear on this stage.[87]

In the spring of 1859, Stockton Hall presented "Campbell's Minstrels," another traveling minstrel show, this one featured a brass band. The popularity of the Campbell's Minstrels name during the 1850s had led to multiple shows using that name; the one in Leavenworth advertised itself as "Beler's Campbell Minstrels." With "Pell as 'Brudder Bones,'" the review reads, they "surpass anything of the kind that has ever been seen in our city," their jokes having a "spice of originality"

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[84] *KWH*, 17, 24 July, 1858.

[85] Ibid., 16, 23 October, 1858.

[86] Ibid., 13 November, 1858.

[87] Lincoln arrived in Leavenworth on 3 December, 1859 and stayed for three days, during which time he gave an early campaign speech at the Hall. *A Guide to Leavenworth, Kansas*, American Guide Series, Works Progress Administration, Kansas Writers' Project (Leavenworth: Leavenworth Chronicle, 1940); J.H. Johnston, III, ed., *Early Leavenworth and Fort Leavenworth: A Photographic History* (Leavenworth: J.H. Johnston, III, 1977), 28; on that page is a photo of the old Stockton Hall.

compared to the "hackneyed saws" to which Leavenworthers were accustomed – comments designed to fill the seats.[88] Over at the National Theater, the Burt contingent continued with mostly stock "legitimate" plays, with the "stars" Emily and Louis J. Mestayer as featured performers, although they played Stockton Hall with the Thornes as well. To underscore the increasing presence of "free-staters" and the declining influence of "pro-slave" interests in Leavenworth, the editor of the *Leavenworth Daily Times* observed that thunderstorms were moving toward Weston [Missouri] whose atmosphere, "Heaven knows, needs purging."[89]

Horace Greeley followed his own admonition to "Go West," and arrived in Leavenworth on May 17, 1859. The newspapers of this period have numerous advertisements directed at "fifty-niners" bound for the "gold fields of Kansas" on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. A benefit performance for Mrs. Kate Demin and Sam Ryan, part of the popular Ryan family of troupers, featured "A Life Woman in the Mines, or, Adventures at Pike's Peak."[90] The quest for gold represented one of the original motivations of imperial advancement from Cortes to De Soto to Jamestown; the Kansas Gold Rush was another wave of that quest. California veterans who had "seen the elephant" and greenhorns from back East alike descended on the elbow of the Missouri River to outfit themselves for the trek across the plains. This quest would exacerbate relations with the Plains Indians, making Fort

[88] *Leavenworth Daily Times*, 19-22 April, 1859; hereafter *LDT*.

[89] Ibid., 23, 26-28 April, 1859; for the Mestayers at Stockton Hall, see *LDT*, 4 May, 1859.

[90] Ibid., 27 May, 1859.

Leavenworth a self-fulfilling prophecy and ushering in the last generation of open warfare between white encroachers and indigenous peoples.[91]

In the ongoing challenge of alleviating the empire's cognitive dissonances, it is difficult to find a more clear-cut example than the pro- and anti-slavery versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a theatrical adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel of the same name. The anti-slavery *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was presented in the genre of melodrama, with the Manichean characters of good and evil. The pro-slavery version tended to take on the manic air of a minstrel show. By the time regular theater performances were presented in Leavenworth, both blackface minstrelsy and Stowe's novel had taken the country by storm. In places where pro-slave sentiment was dominant, such as the burgeoning town of Leavenworth, this dissonance was particularly acute. The first presentation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Leavenworth brought in "by all odds the largest audience of the season" in October of 1859. This version of the play was most likely that of George Aiken's which maintained the anti-slavery tenor of the story. One William Yerby took exception to that sentiment and protested so vociferously that the police removed him from the theater. Yerby was fined for disturbing the theater's peace but he nevertheless challenged Leavenworth's Marshall Malone to a "duel with Colt revolvers, large size, at sixteen paces." He also reportedly threatened the press to which the editor of the *Leavenworth Daily Times* replied, "Oh, dear how we quake in our stocking-feet."[92]

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[91] An interesting study of the environmental impact of this encounter is Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

[92] *LDT*, 26-28 October, 1859; also recounted by James Malin in "Theater in Kansas, 1858-1868: Background for the Coming of the Lord Dramatic Company to Kansas, 1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 23:1 (Spring 1957), 47-48.

In August of 1862 *UTC* was presented again, but this time Leavenworth residents saw a version of the play which downplayed the anti-slavery sentiment of the original novel. The editor of the *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* noted critically that Simon Legree was left out, and Uncle Tom was portrayed as the obedient "happy darky."[93] Both Christy's and Wood's minstrels had a pro-slave *UTC* as early as 1853. A one act skit called *Life Among the Happy* was developed into an "anti-Uncle Tom opera" – i.e., pro-slavery – by omitting August St. Clare and Simon Legree. A version of the play by Henry J. Conroy eliminated the anti-slavery theme, adding a comical character "Mr. Penetrate Partyside." By the time of these performances in Leavenworth, there were at least three different "anti-Tom" plays onstage in New Orleans.[94]

The *Times* editor briefly described a version presented the next year:

> "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is announced at the theatre for this and to-morrow evenings. A crowded house greeted its first production, Wednesday night, and we can unhesitatingly say that as far as it goes the play was excellently put upon the stage and in the leading characters well done . . . but nevertheless the omission of the scenes with Legree and Casey, and the death of Uncle Tom, make the play seem as incomplete as if one had read only the first volume of the book itself, with no chance of getting the remainder of the story. Lack of people may be sufficient excuse for shortening the play, and we would much rather this were the case than that it were done to spare the sensibilities of the resident remnant of Border Ruffianism in the city.[95]

That theater managers continued to present the watered-down version of *UTC* attests to the lingering persistence of pro-slave sentiment in Leavenworth. And even the

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[93] *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 6-9 August, 1862.

[94] Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Literature* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 274, 276, 280.

[95] Ibid., 28-30 April, 2 May, 1863; Malin, 48-49.

sympathetic Aiken version eliminated debates over slavery as well as much of the context that Stowe provided in the novel to give the humanity of the slaves maximum impact on the reader.[96]

The southern secession and the beginning of armed civil conflict – another civil war in the English-speaking empire of North America – was reflected at the western edge and catalyst of the conflict. "Jayhawkers on the Stage" was a featured performance at the old National, now re-named the "American Theater" by "Colonel" Ben Wheeler, who had been performing at the Melodeon since 1860. Now, military "bombast" joined minstrelsy, the circus, and "legitimate" theater on Leavenworth stages. An unadvertised performance, dubbed "Bombastes Furioso" that "brought down the house" was performed in September of 1861. The involvement of the audience in these types of performances was underscored by an incident reported in the *Daily Conservative*. At the end of the performance of "Bombastes Furioso," General Bombastes and the "King" lay dead on the stage, an individual from the audience appeared from behind the scenes and tore an epaulet from the General's coat. He then took a pair of the General's boots that were hanging from a hook on the wall under a sign that read: "He who these boots displace – must meet Bombastes face to face." The crowd roared, the boots and epaulet were returned, and veteran actor John Merrifield, who portrayed Bombastes, said he had seen nothing like it in twenty-four years.[97]

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96 Gossett, *UTC in American Culture*, 267.

[97] *LDC*, 18 September, 1861.

This trend continued into the post-war period, as Leavenworth increasingly assumed an identity as another river town that served as a conduit for empire. The character of performances reflected the multifarious expressions of empire from "polite" performances directed at the burgeoning bourgeois population to the controlled chaos of the minstrel show directed toward a more democratized version of empire. The questioning of empire, as seen in the early Jim Crow performances, and outright rejection of it seen in indigenous performances of the Great Plains, were being enfolded into the overwhelming force of libertarian economic empire.

Performances in the Trans-Appalachian West in the first half of the nineteenth-century were laced with the assumptions of the righteousness of imperial expansion and chattel slavery. Sol Smith, a popular actor, manager, and colorful character of antebellum St. Louis, epitomized Jacksonian attitudes of democratic-republican empire. White men who believed in and expounded the democratic nature of the white republic were the paragon of virtue. Smith had a strong moral center which strangely evaporated where Native and African Americans were concerned. This was the *zeitgeist* of the age. Blackface minstrelsy swallowed up a burgeoning criticism of the white republic; the redface performances of Edwin Forrest overshadowed the obscure realism of James Doddridge's play. But the conflict over the expansion of slavery became more than even theater could assuage. As happened in the 1770s regarding the Trans-Atlantic empire, the Trans-Appalachian empire imploded over Constitutional issues engendered by a centralized power structure bent on expansion. All of this was coming to a head at the frontier town of Leavenworth, Kansas Territory in the 1850s. Blackface minstrelsy's popularity was near its peak,

Indian wars on the plains were not going well although their lands in the new territory were being expropriated once again, and the struggle over slavery's expansion was in close proximity – so close that theater performance could not work its magic. The empire republic was in for another transformation.

Conclusion

While researching this project, I asked an academic list-serve specializing in indigenous affairs what one might read in the way of North American post-colonial literature. The most popular response was, "You mean they left?" The present study could be a kind of post-colonial, or at least post-imperial study that explores the cultural history of the British and Euro-American empires in North America. In this regard, it joins historians Kathleen Wilson, Catherine Hall, the Subalternist school, and others dating back to Charles Beard in attempting to provide a historical narrative that takes a critical look at economic empire.[1] I have tried to expose assumptions as they emanated from popular performances that obscured a critical viewpoint of these empires both at the time and in the historical record. I do not claim that this preliminary study is in any way a final word on this matter. But I do hope that this can join these other works in contributing to a more realistic way of seeing American history that eschews the rhetoric of imperial culture.

As other scholars have noted and as I surveyed in the first two chapters, this particular mythical construction began with the rise of capitalism and the search for resources, markets, and above all, profits. As I explore in Chapter One, the association of theater with the market was the beginning of theater's role in

[1] Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretatino of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The Free Press, 1913); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980); Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

generating a pro-empire narrative. This empire, in the English-speaking world, began with the consolidation of feudal political entities on the island of Britain. The 1800 Act of Union was a *de jure* acknowledgment of a *de facto* union that had taken place with the ascendancy of James Stuart in 1603. As this event coincided with British trans-Atlantic imperial expansion, theater had a rich trove of material for propounding a pro-empire discourse in an environment where freedom of speech and the press were limited. Also in Chapter One, I show that the "Glorious" Revolution and the ascendancy to the throne of William and Mary brought a constitutional sanction to the pursuit of commercial empire in Britain. The Augustan theater that arose in the eighteenth century incorporated the republican rhetoric of the Whigs, the "enthusiasm" of the "Great Awakening," and socio-cultural expectations for the *nouveau riche* bourgeoisie that commercial empire created. A culture of "politeness" established standards for those who wished, as C.B. MacPherson termed it, to "strive with the strivers."[2] If there were to be non-landed economic elites whose money – acquired through the imperial process – bought them power and position in the empire, there were certain behavioral standards to be met. Theater, along with print media, was both instructor and critique of these standards. "Politeness" both filtered entrance to the bourgeoisie and rationalized the depredations committed in the course of "doing business."

In Chapter Two, I show how theater operated in an environment where one of the most attractive aspects of capitalism was its combination of economic

[2] C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 43.

libertarianism and seemingly universal opportunities for the individual acquisition of material wealth. This relative freedom and social mobility created a desire to minimize, not the negative consequences of individualistic materialism, but *awareness* of those consequences. Significantly, the increased social mobility of the libertarian environment of the colonies did not erase a class structure, but began to supplant an aristocrat – plebian caste system with a capitalist – proletarian / peasant class structure. Theater helped outline the "rules" that would facilitate one's rise in this more fluid system.

That the radicals and revolutionaries of the North American British colonies turned toward this fundamental reality only to turn away from it again is the cultural history told in Chapter Three. The fundamental connection to the land, which was pretty well established in many areas of the colonies, was considerably diminished in the tantalizing halls of power and the prospects of consumer culture. The path back to true independence from the imperial market economics became overgrown with delusions of personal and imperial glory, even among indigenous peoples.

The attempt to create, through performance, a counter-narrative to the British imperial narrative in the aftermath of war is the problem pursued in Chapter Four. The fundamental conflict between the need to assuage the cognitive dissonances of empire and nationalism and the desire to reflect notions of "virtue" on the theater stage confronted individuals like theater manager and playwright William Dunlap after the Revolution. It is no coincidence that the theater which had come to be associated with dissipation and luxury by many in the 1770s, returned with the re-establishment of centralized authority and a bourgeois ruling class in the late 1780s.

Expansion of the "empire republic" commenced with a vengeance during this period as well. Two wars had been fought for access to lands up the Hudson Valley watershed and beyond the Appalachian Mountains, and land speculators, "frontiersmen," and subsequently the military entered that region. This libertarian environment had the effect of "democratizing" the empire that now saw itself as a shining beacon of hope for humanity. To question this assumption was taboo. Performances adjusted to meet the needs and demands of a more diverse group of peoples, less steeped in the politics of "politeness" of an earlier age. The circus, particularly equestrian performers, gymnasts, menageries, fireworks displays, and other miscellaneous acts competed for access to a public that would support them. Melodrama and pantomime also mingled with these plebian genres to reflect a narrative that painted this process in warm, glowing colors. The clash between the various socio-economic classes in the new republic, well-known in the political sphere, was reflected in frontier theater and performance as well. The differences in attitudes inherent in the performing company of John Bill Ricketts's circus and those of the bourgeois John Bernard are striking. The condescension for the rural, artisan, and plebian classes is writ large in the rhetoric of the latter; the empathy and solidarity with those same groups is readily apparent in the former.

Gothic melodrama in the United States provided, at one level, a critique of unrestrained economic empire. On the other hand, its combination of folktale and imperial rationalization helped assuage the cognitive dissonances associated with the democratizing empire. The culture of empire as a purveyor of modernity became intertwined with a very old European folk culture – removed from its pagan roots by

centuries of Christianity – but nevertheless quite valid and functional as a culture of the people. Feudal systems of power permitted such culture to persist if not prosper. But the culture of capitalistic empire and its expectations of conformity to and support of the new economic arrangement were introduced into the folk cultures brought from Europe. This formed a syncretic culture that worked to expunge the more unproductive aspects of folk culture, providing "entertainments" that also validated and normalized the power structure. As the nation-building project of the early republic democratized – at least among the white population – the material benefits of empire, folk culture became further intertwined with the culture of empire. The circus, melodrama, and other performances that drew on folk culture and curiosity grew in popularity and provided both an outlet for dissent and a rationalization of imperial expansion and slavery.

In the Trans-Appalachian West, the line between "legitimate" theater and other performances grew muddled indeed. Traveling theater troupes from the Kentucky Circuit, begun by Luke, and his nephew or son (it is unclear), Nobel Luke Usher to Montreal through the Mahican Channel brought these performances to the leading edge of empire. Expanded by the Samuel Drake troupe, Noah Ludlow, Solomon Smith, and later a partnership of the latter two, Jacksonian sentiments of white, democratic-republicanism became the new politeness. Blackface performances by whites that aimed to imitate real African Americans, at first subversive, became standardized and non-threatening to the empire as the "minstrel show," commonly referred to simply as the "nigger show." Redface performances provided both rationale for land usurpation and a kind of national identity, even going

so far as to feature a pseudo-ritual performance of handing the mantle of North American "nativeness" to white, Jacksonian, Euro-Americans in the play *Metamora*.

The movement for reform in mid-century brought new challenges to the theater stage and the nation at large. The growing movements of abolitionism, the "Friends of the Indian," the reform of alcoholics, and the assertion of women's rights shook up the mythic construction of the empire republic. After the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, things were never the same – a new cognitive dissonance that the theater ultimately could not assuage reared its head. This began to play out in the West, above the Missouri River, when much of the huge Indian reserve on the Plains was opened to white settlement in 1854.

For the most part, the mythic world portrayed on the antebellum stages of the small town of Leavenworth, in Kansas Territory was much like the Jacksonian stages of the Ohio Valley. It portrayed heroic white men beating back the savage wilderness of the American continent. It portrayed virtuous heroines keeping their homes, bearing their children, and following their men in the "glorious cause" of nation-building. It also portrayed alternatively Noble and Ignoble Savage red men whose claim to stewardship of North America was usurped by the more deserving Christian Anglo. Audiences saw "happy darkies" down on the old plantation who did not know enough to take care of themselves in the sophisticated world of the Euro-American and so were benevolently enslaved for their own good.

But something happened in Leavenworth and other theaters in the 1850s, as well. Another narrative of the humanity of the African American slaves began seriously competing with the old assumption of white supremacy. A kind of realism

was invading the mythic structures of Jacksonian America. The radical notion that whites and blacks might actually be equal in their humanity, sophistication, and development was explosive. Playwrights and theater managers scurried to counter the narrative of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with versions of the play that validated slavery and protected the "happy darky" mythology. Both versions circulated on the theater circuits of the increasingly troubled republic, but ultimately violent conflict could not be contained. One empire, dependent on the usurpation of slave labor, was confronted by another empire that demanded supremacy and loyalty. A bloodbath ensued.

There is much more that could be said about many aspects of this story of the creation of societal assumptions and what can happen when they are seriously challenged. No biography, for example, exists of Sol Smith, as quintessential a Jacksonian as one could ask for. The imperial character of American music between the Revolution and the Civil War would be very illuminating and helpful to "new imperial" narrative. A more contained story of frontier theater from Quebec to New Orleans needs to be told – and would be told here but for travel and time constraints. A study in contrasts, more in-depth than the present work, of non-imperial indigenous performances with those of the culture of empire would be very revealing as to the nature and extent of imperial performances. A study that surveys the culture of empire from its arrival on the Great Plains at Leavenworth to the *fin de siécle* Wild West Show – *as* a study of empire – would also be a valuable contribution to what falls under the heading of a "New Imperial History."

The mythic world created by imperial culture sealed off the true character of all parties involved. It sealed off the fear and desperation of the Euro-Americans as they usurped the lands and identities of the indigenous peoples who were destroyed without ever being known. Most Euro-Americans never saw those aspects of the indigenous cultures that would have taught them about the place they now occupied. In the collective imagination of the theater, purveyors of empire saw the mythically-constructed dimension of the imperial project acted out in their own heads, as it were. As a culture, Euro-America was unwilling, and perhaps unable, to look at the broader picture of the results of their project at a realistic level. To protect them from the horrors of the mix of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the sale and usurpation of human chattel that characterized the expansion of the American empire, the theater (and other cultural productions) portrayed them as righteous carriers of the Christian God's divine plan for North America. All other peoples were cast as extras in the great drama of nation-building. Added to the horrors of cultural destruction and enslavement was the tragedy that Euro-Americans never came to know the realities of the indigenous nations they were replacing, the Africans and African Americans they enslaved, the lands they irreversibly altered, or even a realistic view of their own visage.

At some point, colonial empire that permanently occupies and claims a land base must stop being both colonial and an empire. I do not think this has happened in North America, nor do I know who would decide if it had. Having grown up and spent nearly all of my life close to the natural world in the interior of North America, I have developed a great appreciation for the indigenous cultures of this continent,

and something of a disdain for the imperial culture of capitalism in the United States. The present-day population of the U.S. represents five percent of the world's population; yet we consume twenty-five percent of its resources and produce thirty-three percent of its pollution. That is not a functional system, and it exists because a modern culture of empire tells us not what we need to know, but what we think we want to know. After five hundred years of colonizing North America, we still have an imperial culture, we are still colonists, we still live in a mythically constructed false reality that minimizes or obscures the unpleasant truths about ourselves and our society.

However, as history has shown, with Stowe's 1852 novel the culture of empire was, briefly, turned on its head and four million people who had previously been enslaved were freed, if freed into an oppressive, divisive, and dangerous milieu. The Puritans who colonized Massachusetts, scared to death of the indigenous peoples who were characterized as the "minions of Satan," nevertheless held an allegiance to something greater than the Landlord, the Duke, the Archbishop of Canterbury, or even the King. As brutal as they may have been to the native peoples, they nevertheless nurtured an institutional sense of personal conscience. The notion of *res publica*, of commonwealth, of compassion toward fellow creatures is more than Pollyannaish rhetoric, it may prove to be a survival mechanism. To move toward such a vision, one must grasp the true nature of what has been done in the name of "virtue," patriotism, nationalism – in short, the "Rising Glory" of empire. An honest look at where we have been allows us to see where we are. The present study is a small piece in a larger effort to understand how we got here.

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